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MY QUEEN

MARION MARLOWE IN BUFFALO
OR BETRAYED BY A RIVAL COMPANY
BY GRACE SHIRLEY

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MY QUEEN
A WEEKLY JOURNAL FOR YOUNG WOMEN

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Marion Marlowe in Buffalo;

OR,

BETRAYED BY A RIVAL COMPANY.

By GRACE SHIRLEY.

CHAPTER I.

A SURPRISE.

"In the name of all the sacred snakes, Temple, just listen to this: 'Marion Marlowe, the most beautiful actress upon the American stage, has been engaged and will positively appear with the Rippel and Rose Theatrical Combination at the Palace Theatre on Main street this evening!' Now, what in thunderation do you make out of that? Has Marion gone crazy, or is it the paper?"

Bert Jackson blurted out the words in a tone of genuine surprise, at the same time handing the paper he was reading to his companion to look at. Mr. Temple, proprietor and manager of the Temple Theatrical Company, took the paper, eagerly. As he ran his eye over the notice his face grew blank with astonishment.

"I can't understand it, Jackson," he said, after a minute. "I would as soon expect the sun to refuse to shine as for Miss Marlowe to go back on us, but how would they dare print such a notice if there wasn't any truth in it?"

The two gentlemen were standing in the railroad station at Buffalo one crisp morning in January, and, as they stared at the newspaper, another member of their company joined them.

"I see you have heard the news, Mr. Temple," he began, abruptly. "So Miss Marlowe has left us and gone over to the enemy. Well, I'm surprised, I can tell you! I would not have believed it possible!"

"Neither is it possible, Jones!" said Bert Jackson, promptly. "Miss Marlowe has no notion of leaving the company. This notice is a fake or a mistake or something."

Mr. Jones, who had been hired as a "supe" and then promoted to play the "villain" in an emergency, shook his head a little dubiously at Bert Jackson's answer.

"You can't ever tell anything about a woman," he remarked, very sagely; "no doubt

they've offered her more dough, and, you know, no actress can refuse a raise of salary."

"Bosh! You don't know what you are talking about, Jones!" said Bert, turning his back on him; then he said quietly to the manager: "What shall you do about it, Mr. Temple?"

The manager still looked worried, but he tried to speak cheerfully.

"See Miss Marlowe first, of course, and be sure that there is no truth in it, and then I'll get out an injunction to stop them from using her name. Ten to one they have had the nerve to borrow it without asking permission."

He glanced at his watch and then turned to leave the station.

The Temple Theatrical Company had been on the road now three days, playing one night stands until they reached Buffalo. Now they were booked for three nights at the Alhambra, the best theatre in the city, and this sudden announcement that their star was about to leave them could not but produce a little consternation.

Mr. Temple had already sent the lady members of the company to a good hotel, and, now that the baggage had been attended to, he was ready to follow.

Before they had fairly left the station Bert Jackson touched his arm.

"Look at that!" he exclaimed, indignantly, pointing to an enormous poster. "If they haven't had the audacity to bill the town! Gee whiz! This beats me! I can't understand it!"

Mr. Temple bit his lips as he read the poster. It was another announcement that Marion Marlowe would positively appear at the Palace Theatre.

"Who are Rippel and Rose, and what kind of a show have they?" asked Bert, when he had somewhat recovered from the shock of the sight of the poster.

"A lot of barn-stormers!" was the disgusted reply. "They have a reputation in the West for all sorts of trickery. They steal their plays, and it begins to look as if they steal their players. It's their first trip East, I fancy, and, of course, they are stopping at nothing. I suppose it's Miss Marlowe's re[illegible] that has caught them. Why, since the poor girl was thrown from that train last Monday night, the public has positively been clamoring to see her!"

"Well, why don't they pitch one of their own actresses off, if they want an 'ad?'" asked Bert, disgustedly. "They have no right to try and make capital of our misfortunes. I call them a lot of impudent rascals!"

"I'll see a lawyer at once," said Mr. Temple, quickly. "As you say, Bert, there's no question about Miss Marlowe's integrity. I am only wasting time by waiting to see her."

"Hold on, Mr. Temple! I'm not so sure of that!" said Jones, who was still behind them. "I saw Rose talking with Miss Marlowe not fifteen minutes ago. He was waiting in the lobby of the Imperial, when she and Miss Allyn got there. In my opinion, that looks mighty suspicious. I'd see her first, if I were you. Why, the man wouldn't dare use her name without her permission!"

Bert Jackson wheeled around suddenly and confronted the fellow.

"See here, Jones! You are an honest liar or I would settle you! You mean all right, but you are off your trolley! What you don't know about Miss Marlowe would fill a whole library. You'd better let up insinuating that she is treacherous, or I'll polish off the sidewalk with you!"

"I only told what I saw," muttered Jones, a little stupidly.

"Well, you're bugle-eyed," retorted Bert. "You ought to wear glasses! If Miss Marlowe spoke to Rose at all, it was to refuse his offer. I'm not a betting man, but I'll gamble my last dollar that I'm right on that subject!"

"Have it your own way; I'm done!" retorted Jones, walking off. "I told what I saw and what I believe. It remains to be seen whether I am 'bugle-eyed' or not. As like as not, Jackson, you'll find something wrong with your own vision when you get to the theatre this evening."

"I don't understand how Rose came to speak to her, at all," said Mr. Temple, after the "supe" had gone; "it certainly looks as if he was trying to secure her services, and if she should leave us, it would be dreadful, Bert! There's only one Marion Marlowe! I should hate to lose her!"

"Gee whiz! You make me weary, Temple! Is it possible that you are doubtful, too? Don't you know Marion well enough yet to know that she couldn't do anything so mean as that? Why, Temple, she'd stay with her own company if she wasn't making a cent—if you don't believe it, ask Miss Allyn—there she is coming this minute!"

They were close by the hotel, and, as Bert spoke, he nodded toward a stylishly-dressed young woman, who had just tripped down the steps and was coming toward them.

Miss Allyn was Marion Marlowe's most intimate friend, so the manager hastened his steps and was soon confronting her.

"Lost my curling iron in the shuffle and am on the war path for another," called out Miss Allyn, as she came up, and then the look on their faces made her stop short and stare at them.

"Great Cæsar's ghost! What has happened? Has the property man forgotten the cradle, or has the calcium refused to shine? Speak quick! You look like a couple of scared-to-deaths!"

"What in the world does this mean, Miss Allyn?" asked the manager, as he held out the paper; "I just noticed it a minute ago and it's driving me gray-headed."

"And there's a big poster down at the depot that says the same thing," broke in Bert. "It says distinctly that Marion will appear at the Palace."

Miss Allyn took the paper and glanced at it, curiously. As she read the words her attractive features were a perfect study.

She scowled first and then burst into a merry laugh, and there was a twinkle in her eye as she handed back the paper.

"So that is what he has been writing to her about," she said, coolly. "I knew she was having some correspondence with Rose. I suppose he has discovered, like the rest of us, that there is only one Marion Marlowe!"

"But has she really gone over to the enemy?" asked Mr. Temple, anxiously. "I have run the risk of being annihilated by Bert, here, for even thinking such a thing, but what else can any one make out of that notice, Miss Allyn?"

"It certainly sounds suspicious," said Miss Allyn, soberly. "It doesn't seem like Marion to play us such a trick, but money is an awful temptation, you know, especially to a poor, struggling actress, and, no doubt, they have offered her a handsome salary!"

She spoke so indifferently that both men stared at her, Bert almost gasping for breath at her extraordinary statements.

"Do you think that Marion, our Marion, would accept a bribe?" he managed to ask, hotly. "Why, the thing is preposterous! I'm astonished at you, Alma!"

"You'll be more so before our engagement in Buffalo is over, my boy," remarked Miss Allyn, calmly. "I'm as full of surprises as an egg is full of meat, and, as for Marion—well, you know her resources. It isn't any wonder that our rivals want her!"

With a nod of her head, the young lady started on, leaving Mr. Temple and Bert staring at each other.

"That settles it! Marion has left us!" said Mr. Temple, sourly. "It's just like a woman to be bribed that way! If she wanted more money, why didn't she say so?"

Bert Jackson recovered his wits and his tongue at the same time.

"See here, Temple," he said, with a proud look on his boyish face; "I have known Marion Marlowe since the day she was born, and the man does not live who can doubt her in my presence. If you speak disrespectfully of her again I'll chuck you over the Falls! There she is on the piazza—now you can go and ask her!"

Manager Temple looked ahead with a decidedly sheepish expression on his face.

A beautiful young girl was standing in the street door of the hotel. Her cheeks were glowing with health and her eyes were shining. As she saw them mounting the steps, she put her finger on her lips and then, with a mysterious nod of her head, signaled for them to follow her into the parlor.

CHAPTER II.

A SNAP SHOT.

"Hush! Speak softly! An enemy is at the door!" whispered Marion, tragically, as she led Bert and the manager into the middle of the large parlor.

The next moment she drew a letter from her pocket and handed it to Mr. Temple.

"It's from Rippel and Rose; I got it a week ago," she said, laughingly. "I did not say anything about it because I wanted to settle it myself. You can both of you read it, only you must keep it secret."

"Three hundred a week! So they did really bribe you, Miss Marlowe," was the manager's exclamation, as he glanced over the letter.

"He tried to," said the young girl, with an angry flash in her eyes; "as if I would be a traitor to my friends for any money!"

Bert glanced at Mr. Temple with an exulting smile and the manager's face promptly turned a vivid crimson.

"Of course, money is desirable," went on the young girl, quickly; "but it would have been dishonorable in me to have left you that way, Mr. Temple. I know you have no one engaged to take my place, and, besides, with all my friends in the company! Why, I could not do it!"

"But you talked with Rose only this morning," said Mr. Temple, hesitatingly.

"Merely to repeat my assertion that I would not leave you," said Marion, promptly. "The fellow was so determined to get me that he would not take 'no' for an answer."

"Have you seen this?"

Mr. Temple handed her the newspaper with the astonishing paragraph in it.

As Marion glanced at it her cheeks paled and her lips tightened, severely.

"How dared he?" she cried, angrily. "Why, I refused him absolutely! This is an outrage, Mr. Temple! We must do something at once to undeceive the public!"

Her eyes flashed like fire as she faced her manager, and, once more, the thought that he had been suspicious of her made his cheeks flush crimson.

"Unfortunately there is no time to contradict it," he said, after a minute's pause; "the rascals have already billed the town. Probably their advance agent was here and saw the notice of your accident in the Tuesday papers, and it's a trick to get ahead of us with the public of the city. Of course, I can put a notice in the evening papers, but they will probably publish this again this evening and the public will be in a quandary as to which is truthful, and then, there we are, in another mess. The papers will be so muddled up that people won't go to either theatre!"

"Suppose we take Marion in an open sleigh and exhibit her through the streets," suggested Bert. "We can have a banner over her head with Temple Theatrical Company on it."

"That's a good idea!" began Mr. Temple, but Marion interrupted him.

"Oh, no! That would be awful! I don't believe I could endure it!" cried the young girl, blushing furiously. "It's one thing to be stared at when you are on the stage, but in broad daylight it would be unbearable!"

"Something must be done," said Mr. Temple, soberly. "We are booked at the Alhambra for three nights, and, of course, we are looking for good business! The name of Marion Marlowe is what we depend upon, and if the public thinks you have deserted us, they surely will not come, and if they think there are two of you they will not know which is the right one."

"Let's get permission to publish the hotel register," suggested Bert again, with a glance toward the office; "or we'll get the clerk to swear out an affidavit that she belongs to us, and then have that printed in the afternoon papers."

Mr. Temple laughed in spite of his anxiety.

"I'm afraid he wouldn't be so obliging, Bert," he said, candidly. "No, we must think of some other scheme, but first, I'll go and get out an injunction. Perhaps that will do the work if I can find a way to let the people know that I have done it."

"I'll find a way to let them know!" said Bert, growing ugly; "I'll buy a lot of megaphones and give them to all the small boys and tell them to go through the streets yelling, 'Marion Marlowe is at the Alhambra Theatre!'"

"You certainly are not lacking in ideas, Jackson," said Mr. Temple, who was growing in better humor; "with as fertile a brain as yours to help us out, we ought to come off victorious in our present dilemma."

"Here is Dr. Brookes!" exclaimed Marion, as a handsome young man stuck his

head in the doorway. "Come in quick, doctor, and help us out! Mr. Temple will explain," she added, with a glance at the manager.

Dr. Brookes was a wealthy young man and a dear friend of Marion's. He was on a vacation from his duties, having left his practice in the hands of one of his doctor friends, and, just for a lark, had joined the Temple Theatrical Company as Alma Allyn and Bert Jackson had done.

In the brief three days that they had been on the road the young physician had learned a great deal about professional life, and he was already installed as leading man in the company.

The moment he glanced into the parlor he knew that something was wrong, but, in some way, he had overlooked the notice in the paper.

Mr. Temple explained in a very few words, and then the doctor put on his thinking cap and started to rival Bert's suggetsions.

"You go and get your injunction as quickly as you can, Temple," he said, promptly; "and, meanwhile, Bert and I will hunt up a job printer. By noon we'll have this town fairly blooming with posters, and there won't be any mistaking the fact that we are the attraction!"

There was a light cough behind them and Jones looked in at the door. He had an enormous poster in his hand, which he waved at Mr. Temple.

"Didn't I tell you she'd gone over?" he began, and then caught sight of Marion. The next moment he turned the poster over so that every one could read it.

"Oh, we've seen one of those already," cried Bert, contemptuously; the next second he was interrupted by Mr. Temple, who was examining the poster.

"By all the gods! It's Barton again!" he cried, angrily. "My ex-advance agent, the one who played us that shabby trick at Cohoes, has deliberately handed my own advertising matter over to my enemies!"

As he spoke he pointed to the word Palace on the flaring poster, and they all saw at once that it had only recently been printed in. The original name was Alhambra; it could still be seen indistinctly.

Bert Jackson ground his teeth as this discovery was made.

"I wonder if we'll ever get on that fellow's track," he said, hotly. "Oh, I'd like nothing better than to see him this minute!"

"He's got it in for us, all right," said Mr. Temple, soberly; "and I understand the whole condition of things now. It is Lemadrid who is making him do it! He hates me bitterly, and he is her slave at present."

"Well, we've got to outwit him—that is all there is about it," said Bert, decidedly. "They have the inside track at present, but that will soon be altered."

"I'm not so sure! They've advertised their show, and they've done it well," said Jones, with a guilty look at the young girl. "Why, every fence and ash barrel in town has got one of these on it. And, what is more, I've heard a dozen people say that they were going to the Palace to see her."

"That must be stopped at once!" cried Mr. Temple, starting for the door. "Go on, Dr. Brookes, and put your plan into execution! And, oh, by the way, see what Barton did with all the lithographs I sent him, if you can. I haven't seen one since I struck the place."

"By Jove! That's so!" said Bert, as the manager disappeared. "That fellow Barton must have been a Jim Dandy! I'll bet he's queered us the whole route from start to finish! Gee! Wouldn't I just like to get my hands on the fellow!"

"I'm going to find Alma," said Marion, suddenly. "She's awfully clever at a time like this. Perhaps she can think of some way to get the best of these people. It must be done! That is all there is about it!"

Two young men sauntered into the parlor just as Marion spoke, but the doctor and Bert were in a hurry to see the printer, so they did not notice them.

Marion turned and smiled as her two friends said good-by, and then, as they hurried out, her glance fell upon Jones, who was standing near her.

As she stood in the sunlight by the window, she was just in time to see him wink significantly at the two young men. The next instant there was a curious "click," and then the young girl glanced at them curiously.

They had each taken a "snap shot" at her with a fair-sized camera.

CHAPTER III.

MARION MAKES A FRIEND.

For just a brief instant Marion was amused. It was nothing new to have people photographing her with cameras, but then it suddenly occurred to her what might be their purpose. Her eyes snapped brightly as the thought entered her brain.

As like as not they were her enemies, who wanted her picture for advertising purposes.

To think was to act with Marion Marlowe. There was only one exit from the parlor. In a second she stood before it.

"Gentlemen," she said, quietly, "I am greatly obliged for the honor you have done me, but I must ask you to please hand over those impressions. I do not care to have my picture in the hands of strangers."

She spoke so sweetly that both of the young men were confused for a moment; then one of them answered, a little insolently:

"Actresses are not usually so particular about their pictures, Miss Marlowe! As a public character, your face is public property."

Marion controlled her feelings and answered, quietly:

"In a way, you are right, and in another you are wrong. So far, my picture has been used solely for advertising purposes. That is perfectly legitimate, I believe, in the profession to which I belong."

The two winked at each other and then at Jones.

"Well, to tell you the truth, we want it for advertising purposes," said the fellow, laughing; "we are from Rippel and Rose—and, of course, as you are their new star, you should have no objections!"

"How dare you!" cried Marion, in an outburst of indignation.

"I have nothing whatever to do with Rippel and Rose! I retired them offer a week ago! I am [illegible] with the Temple Theatrical Company!"

The young man who had spoken gazed at her admiringly.

"Well, you are a confoun[illegible] good actress, that's all I've got to say, and—Great Scott, but you are a dandy at booming yourself! Why, that little act of jumping from the train the other night was enough in itself to make you famous!"

The young girl shivered at this allusion to her misfortune. She had been thrown from the train by a madman, and saved almost by a miracle, but, although her face paled, she did not falter in her determination.

"We will not discuss my ability, if you please," she said, haughtily. "The fact remains that you have stolen my picture. You must give it back or I shall have you arrested!"

The words were spoken firmly and both men stared at her with astonishment. It struck them as ridiculous that she should threaten them with arrest for taking a "snap-shot" of her.

"We are not much afraid of that, Miss," said the fellow who had not spoken before. "Why, I frequently steal a dozen pictures a day, and no one has ever dreamed of having me arrested."

"There has to be a first time for everything," said Marion, calmly. "The practice of stealing pictures is an abominable one to me and I shall certainly do as I have said if you do not hand those plates over."

She glanced around the parlor for the bell as she spoke, and one of the fellows made a movement to pass her.

In a second Marion extended her arms to each side of the door.

"Pass me if you dare!" she cried, defiantly; then her glance fell upon Jones, who was standing sheepishly at a little distance.

"Ring the bell, Mr. Jones, and call help from the office! Is it possible that you can stand there and not assist a lady?"

Jones moved over to the bell and was about to press it.

"You'll regret that, you cur!" muttered one of the fellows. "After pointing her out to us, you play the traitor! Just wait until we catch you outside and we'll punch the face off you!"

Bill Jones' hand dropped and he looked more sheepish than ever.

"Ring that bell, you coward!" cried Mc-

rion, sharply. "If you don't, I will scream and bring a dozen people to this parlor!"

"You will not have to do that! What is the trouble, Miss?" asked a voice behind her.

The two camera fiends fell back as Marion turned toward the speaker. He was an elderly man with handsome, aristocratic features.

"Oh, sir! I am so glad you have come! Those two impudent fellows have just taken my picture with their cameras, and I am determined they shall not leave the building with the plates in their possession," explained Marion, timidly.

The gentleman's face grew crimson with wrath.

"I should say not! The puppies!" he exclaimed, as he strode into the room. "Give them up, you loafers, or I'll break my cane over your backs! A nice way, on my soul, to be treating a young lady!"

The two fellows promptly gave up their stolen property, and then skulked out of the hotel, with the elderly gentleman close on their heels and censuring them severely.

Jones hurried away, also, but not before Marion had glanced at him, scornfully. She was disgusted to know that there was such a coward in the company.

Just as the gentleman returned to the parlor Dr. Brookes came back, and Marion hastened to tell him the whole occurrence.

"So that is their game," was the doctor's comment. "Well, I've heard that advance agents and business managers of theatrical companies were inclined to be tricky with their rivals, but I did not know before that they resorted to downright dishonesty! Why, do you know, there's not a member of Rippel and Rose's combination in town? And, as for the proprietors themselves, they have vanished completely, yet the town is fairly bristling with posters like the one Jones showed us. They declare in glowing terms that Marion Marlowe will appear with them this very night at the Palace, and, on one lot, they had the nerve to mention your salary!"

The gentlemanly friend whom Marion had just made was deeply interested as he heard the story.

As Dr. Brookes explained the situation to him he became more and more indignant, and every now and then he looked at Marion in a pitying manner.

"Dear! dear! What a life for an innocent young girl!" he said, finally. "Why, my child, you remind me of my own little girl! She is away at boarding school now, and her mother and I are alone. You must come and see my wife. Do say that you will promise to call on us and meet my little girl's mother."

Marion was delighted, for she had taken a great liking to the old gentleman. He had championed her so nobly, and was so kind and sympathetic.

"I tell you what to do," he said, as he was leaving the room. "Bring one of your companions with you and come for a sleigh ride this afternoon. I have a home just up the river a few miles, and it is a glorious drive; besides, it will be a treat to you to see the Niagara in its present condition. The banks are fringed with ice, but the stream roars on to the Rapids, as though it were constantly defying the ice king to check its progress."

"That will be delightful!" exclaimed Marion, happily. "Alma and I were going to Niagara immediately after luncheon, but, you know, we must be back in time for the evening performance."

"That can be managed easily," responded the gentleman, as he handed her his card. "You will find us at the International, and delighted to see you, and this evening I shall do myself the honor of seeing you act; moreover, I shall come to the Alhambra, and not to the Palace!"

They all laughed, and then Marion went in search of Miss Allyn. She was charmed with the prospect of a trip to the Falls, as well as the sleigh ride along the bank of the river.

As the three left the parlor Jones slid out from behind the *portières,* where he had crept back and hidden himself after his cowardly exit.

"Those two fellows will lay for me and lick me, just as sure as shooting," he muttered to himself. "The only way to save my hide is to help them get the best of Temple. I don't believe they can do it, so there's no harm in making believe I am with them. So she's going to the Falls after lunch. Well, that makes the thing easy!"

CHAPTER IV.

A REMINISCENCE.

While Marion and Miss Allyn were partaking of an early luncheon in the hotel dining-room, the male members of the company were working busily.

Bert had hired a printer to turn out his posters and a dozen men to paste them up, and the press was running full speed to get them ready.

Dr. Brookes had traced a package of lithographs that Barton had left to be called for by Rippel and Rose, and was decidedly puzzled by the fact that they had not asked for them. He confiscated them at once, and they were soon conspicuously displayed, with the word "Alhambra" in big letters directly under them, yet it was apparent that their rivals took no notice of the fact.

"There's something funny about that," he remarked to Bert, as he met him hurrying toward the printer's. "Why, Rippel and Rose had those pictures right in their hands and did not use them; yet, in every other way possible they are booming Miss Marlowe."

"There's a catch it in somewhere," said Bert, very thoughtfully. "They use her name freely enough, yet they don't dare to use her picture."

Mr. Temple came from the direction of the court house and joined them as they were talking.

"The injunction is all right, but I can't find any one to serve it on, except the fellow in the box office at the Palace," he said, excitedly. "Rippel and Rose were both in town at seven this morning, but they've gone into hiding. I can't so much as get a sight of them!"

"How is their advance sale!" asked the doctor, a little anxiously.

"The lobby is full, and there's a line way out on the street," said the manager, dolefully; "while at the Alhambra we are doing nothing, and with very good reason. There wasn't so much as a poster displayed there this morning."

"But I thought you had sent some one on from Albany," exclaimed Bert; "didn't you send a man to take the place of Barton?"

"Yes, and he's been bribed to throw us down," said Mr. Temple, angrily; "so we are still without an advance agent to undo what Barton has done! If I can't secure a trustworthy man, at once, the tour may as well be abandoned."

"It's a pity Howard Everett wasn't acting in that capacity," laughed Bert. "He showed himself a thoroughbred in that affair at Cohoes."

"I've got a man in view," said Mr. Temple; then he turned to Bert and put his hand on his shoulder. "Go down to the box office of the Palace and see what they are doing, will you, Jackson? I've got to get on the track of either Rippel or Rose. There's no time to lose, if I expect to serve this paper!"

Watching his chance, Bert slipped into the line before the Palace, and when he reached the window he handed in the price of a ticket.

"Are you dead sure it's the Marion Marlowe that was chucked off the train at Hudson the other night?" he asked of the freckle-faced youth who was selling tickets.

"I ain't answering no questions! Got no time! It's Marion Marlowe, all right! That's all I know," was the answer.

"Got a picture of her?"

Bert was not to be discouraged by the young man's brusqueness.

"Naw! She's too pretty ter paint! She'd bust ther canvas!" said the fellow, as he reached for the next man's money.

Bert got out of the way and started down the street. Suddenly he saw Jones a block ahead of him, in company with two fellows.

"That's queer. He must pick up friends easy," Bert said to himself, and a moment later he had completely forgotten it. When he got back to the hotel, Marion and Miss Allyn were lingering over their dessert and several members of the company were sitting at the next table.

"Oh, Bert!" cried Marion, "do come right here and sit with us! Don't you envy us? We are going for a sleigh ride a few miles up the river!"

"Gee! You don't mean it! Are you sure it will hold?" asked Bert, with a grin.

"Oh, I don't mean on the river, Bert. I mean as near to it as we can get," laughed Marion, gayly. "It is only frozen along the edges, but Mr. Gray says it is grand! Oh,

you will like Mr. Gray, Alma; he is perfectly lovely.

Bert clasped his hands over his heart with an affectation of agony.

"Has it come to this? Are you really smitten, Marion? Quick, tell me the truth; who is the lucky fellow, this Mr. Gray, as you call him, that I have never even heard of?"

Marion explained as fast as she could, and Bert burst out laughing when he heard how he had foiled the youths with the cameras.

A moment later, when she was telling him about their "super's" share in the affair, Bert did not make any comment, but he did some serious thinking.

"Oh, Miff Marlowe! Me wants to wide on the Maid of the Mift!" called out a child's voice, and little Ruby, the child actress of the company, slid down from her chair at the next table and ran over to Marion.

The young girl picked her up and kissed her tenderly.

"The Maid of the Mist is not running, I'm afraid, darling," she said, very tenderly. "It is so cold and icy in the water now, you know! Why, if little Ruby went down under the big Falls now, she would get a big icicle on her pudgy little nose, and perhaps she would freeze solid, so that no one could thaw her."

The child looked at her very soberly for a minute, and then gave her a hug.

"Den me will do an' see de g'ate, bid water wif mamma, an' wear my 'ittle kitty muff," she said, contentedly.

Marion kissed her tenderly as she put her down, and the little one ran back to her seat beside her mother.

"I'd like to see the Falls in summer, when they are in their glory," spoke up Bert; "and, say, wouldn't it be fun to shoot the Rapids?"

"It would be a trifle chilly to do it now," laughed Miss Allyn; "but I think I would rather see the Falls frozen over! That is a sight one does not see very often."

"I wonder how many victims the Falls can count," spoke up Mrs. Burnside, suddenly; "I am told that a great, great many people have gone over the cataract, and I am sure I shall think of them all the moment I see the Falls."

"That is why I never go to Niagara now," spoke up a solemn voice near her.

They all turned quickly and saw an elderly, sad-looking man sitting at the next table.

"I saw a man in a boat go through the Rapids once," he went on, "and the sight has haunted me ever since. It thrills me with horror every time I recall it."

"How awful for you," Marion murmured, sympathetically.

"A trifle worse for the man, I'm thinking," said Miss Allyn, uneasily.

"That was in summer, I suppose, said Bert, with interest.

"No, it was mid-winter," was the answer; "he had tried to cross the stream and a cake of ice struck him. He could not get clear of it. By the time he was free the current had mastered him! Oh, it was horrible! horrible!"

The speaker's face grew ashen and he put one hand over his eyes. In an instant the silence grew oppressive in the spacious dining-room.

"But he did it on purpose, didn't he?" asked another of the guests. "It was the third accident that winter, and the only one that was witnessed, if I remember."

"You are quite right," spoke up another of the guests; "I remember that man. They called it a suicide!"

"It did not matter to me which it was, accident or suicide," said the old man, sadly; "it gave me a shock that I have never gotten over. I never look at the Rapids now—they are too cold and cruel."

Marion shivered slightly. The words chilled her very marrow. Some way this mental picture had spoiled the enjoyment of her anticipated drive along the river.

"Ugh! He gave me cold chills up my spine!" murmured Bert, as the first speaker left the dining-room. "I guess I'll stay in Buffalo and not go to Niagara."

"I must go, because I promised," said Marion, soberly.

"Well, be sure you are back by eight this evening," answered Bert, "for you have a feat to perform to-night that I am interested in seeing. It will beat all your previous achievements all hollow!"

"For goodness sake! What does he mean?"

The question was asked by Miss Ellis, the ingenue, who was sitting at the next table.

"It's one of Bert's jokes, I guess," chimed in Mrs. Burnside.

Marion flushed a little, for she knew what was coming, and the huge dining-room was full of guests, who were all listening intently.

"Why, according to the bill boards, she has to play the leading *rôle* in two theatres this evening," explained Bert, promptly. "She is billed for the Palace as well as the Alhambra!"

The other members of the company had only just heard of the condition of affairs, so Mrs. Burnside did not hesitate to express her opinion.

"Rippel and Rose have got nerve to play a trick like that!" she cried, indignantly. "The idea of their daring to steal Marion's name! I do hope that Mr. Temple will make them pay for their colossal impudence.

"The one and only Marion Marlowe will be at the Alhambra?" said Bert, distinctly. "Oh, there'll be music at the box office of the Palace to-night, when the people find how they have been lied to!"

CHAPTER V.

THE FALLS.

"Isn't it perfectly magnificent, Alma?"

Marion was standing as near the slippery edge of Table Rock as she dared, and was gazing down at the roaring cataract, which seemed fuming with fury at the walls of ice on either side which were narrowing its grandeur. The young ladies had gone to Niagara by train, and found their new friends at the International, and the four had walked down to the Falls together.

"It is grand, but the ice spoils it just a little," was Alma's answer, but Marion was so absorbed in the scene that she hardly heeded her.

"We come down and stay at the hotel a great deal," remarked Mrs. Gray, a sweet-faced lady of fifty. "We enjoy the Falls, especially the Rapids, and, I fancy, I sleep better when I am here. I do so love the sound of the water."

"Perhaps Mr. Temple can arrange for us to sleep at Niagara! It's a pity we have only three nights, isn't it, Marion?" said Alma.

The young girl turned her beautiful eyes from the loveliness of the scene before her.

"Oh, I wish we could stay here forever!" she exclaimed, in a tense, subdued voice. "It is the most fascinating place that I ever dreamed of! I could be perfectly content just to sit and gaze forever!"

Miss Allyn laughed and put her hand affectionately upon her companion's shoulder.

"Oh, no, you wouldn't, Marion! It would soon become tiresome. Just fancy looking at the same old spray, and listening to the same old roar forever! It is not your nature to love monotony! You were born for society and excitement, dearie!"

"I seem to have it, whether I was born for it or not," replied Marion, with a sad smile crossing her lovely lips; "something seems to happen very frequently in my career, and I don't have to stand on a corner and wait for it, either!"

"No, your luck, good and bad, seems to come unexpectedly," was the answer: "but I do hope, Marion, that the bad is all over. We are all going to try and look out for you sharper in future."

"This affair that Miss Marlowe told me about is most extraordinary," remarked Mr. Gray. "Why, Rippel and Rose must be most unscrupulous fellows! The idea of their daring to steal the name of a woman!"

"Perhaps they still think they can get her," said Miss Allyn, slowly. "As I understand it, their show is really on the vaudeville order. They could easily sandwich in a specialty of some sort, you know, and it is quite probable that they have heard that Marion is a fine singer."

"Is that so? Oh, I should love dearly to hear you!" cried Mrs. Gray, delightedly. "My daughter Maude is a singer, but not a beautiful one exactly; she is having her voice cultivated, and it has really a very sweet quality."

"Marion's voice is glorious," said Miss Allyn. "Oh dear, it would sound heavenly with the accompaniment of the water!"

She turned to Marion as she spoke, with a merry twinkle in her eyes. She was not only

longing to hear her friend sing under such poetic environments, but there was another reason which she dared not mention.

There were a great many people about, and they were all staring at Marion. Her beauty was so marked that she attracted attention unconsciously, and Miss Allyn was just a good enough business woman to wish to take advantage of this, under the present circumstances. Marion's picture was displayed all over Buffalo and Niagara by now, as well as the fact that she was to appear at the Alhambra.

If she could just be inveigled into singing a little song! Miss Allyn's eyes danced with anticipation as she continued her pleading.

"Just one little ballad, Marion! See, there is hardly any one on Table Rock; you could stop, you know, if any more people came, and then think, dear, how glad they would all be to hear you."

"I don't wish to deprive them of the pleasure, I am sure," said Marion, gayly. "If I thought they really wished to hear me sing I would favor them in a minute, but, somehow, it seems a little immodest to force my music upon them."

"I wonder if we can get into the Cave of the Winds," spoke up Mr. Gray. "We'll get a sleigh and drive over the suspension bridge to the Canadian side. If we can go down into the cave it will be a sight worth seeing, and just the place to have our music!"

"You'll have a 'first' for once, sure!" laughed Miss Allyn; "but do come, Marion! It is a splendid suggestion!"

"My voice will be literally 'frozen out,'" was the young girl's merry answer, but she turned at once and followed her companions.

There were a dozen or more people ahead of them when they reached the Cave, and among them were several members of the Temple Theatrical Company.

"Oh, we are all here!" called out Miss Ellis, as she caught sight of Marion, and then she disappeared with Mrs. Burnside into the weird, frozen cavern.

Marion waited until her own party was close beside her; then, choosing the loftiest spot in the cave that she could find, she burst out in the grand measures of "The Star-spangled Banner."

The effect was so curious as to be almost uncanny, but no one could mistake the wonderful range of her voice, and the icy cavern seemed flooded with mellow harmony. The other tourists came hurrying back from the end of the cave, and, as Marion's song was finished, she found Dr. Brookes standing close by her side.

There were delighted calls for another song, but the young girl only laughed, and, as the doctor offered her his arm to help her over the slippery floor, there was a round of applause in the echoless cavern.

They were all slipping and scrambling now, but the doctor held her tightly, and, just before they emerged from the cave, he bent a little nearer to her.

"Marion, dear Marion, your song was glorious," he murmured. "Oh, Marion, darling, will you never say 'yes' to my old, old question? I would give my life to win your love, my goddess! Let me beg you just once more—won't you try to love me, Marion?"

There was a depth of tenderness in his voice that the girl had never heard before, and for a moment her heart beat so loudly that it almost choked her.

"Here, with all this glory about us, Marion," went on the doctor, pleadingly, as they again caught sight of the rushing cataract; "with the music of your voice thrilling the very spirit of the waters, say that you will try to love me, darling! Say that my adoration, my affection, will not be in vain! Oh, I could conquer the world with you beside me, Marion!"

Again the throbbing of her heart almost choked her utterance, but Marion placed her hand affectionately upon the young man's arm.

"Wait, Reginald—please wait," she murmured; "if it comes, I shall be glad, for I long to make you happy—but love—my love—is long in coming! I seem to be incapable, some way, of ever loving."

"Impossible! Your whole nature is love," came in an eager answer.

The doctor moved a little nearer and held her more closely.

"Now, Marion, sing the Water Song," called out Miss Allyn at that moment. "You know the one I mean, about the rainbow

spirit of the waterfall. It is all that is needed to make this scene perfect!"

A group of shining people crowded around her and the doctor fell back. There was no further time for the declaration of the grand passion which he felt for her.

Marion sang the song, with her eyes fixed on the shining waters and glittering prisms of ice, which the sun was now burnishing with myriad scintillating colors.

Here, with only the heavens above her, the beautiful voice rang out like a bugle, and the very spirit of the sunlight seemed to dance in her tones as she sang her song to the roaring, half-frozen cataract.

The effect was sublime, and her hearers applauded her enthusiastically, until the young girl's cheeks were glowing with embarrassment.

There was a general movement to return after this, and in the confusion a man stepped suddenly to her side. It was Mr. Rose, of the Rippel and Rose Combination.

"If you will come to the Palace at any hour this evening and sing that last song I will give you three hundred dollars for one night," he whispered, eagerly.

Marion turned and faced him with flashing eyes.

"If I were a man I would know how to answer you, you scoundrel!" she cried out, sharply. "Have you no shame, Mr Rose, that you dare pursue me with your bribery?"

Before the fellow could answer, Dr. Brookes had him by the collar

"What shall I do with him, Miss Marlowe?" he asked, very coolly

"Drop him into the water!" cried out Mrs Burnside, who had just recognized him

"You had better not touch him; he is a cur!" said Marion decisively. "A fellow who is dishonest in business will reap his own reward! Leave him to his fate—he is beneath your notice!"

"You are right as usual, Miss Marlowe," said the doctor, quickly. Then he gave the cringing theatrical manager a look that set his ears to tingling.

As the party made their way up the bank, Mr. Rose looked after them. He was too much a coward to fight a man, but he had fully determined to get even with Miss Marlowe.

"There is more than one way to do it," he muttered, as he hurried back across the bridge; "I've already queered the company; now I'll get square with her! Imagine her refusing three hundred dollars for a single performance!"

Miss Marlowe's party had lingered to view the Falls from the Canadian side, so Rose was first to reach the International hotel. As he entered the lobby he found the two "camera fiends" waiting to see him.

"We have a dozen of her pictures, if you want them," said one.

"Now, the thing is to duplicate her and do away with the original."

The words were extraordinary, but Rose nodded his head. Mysterious as they sounded, he understood them perfectly.

CHAPTER VI.

A BOLD MOVE IN THE GAME.

"Now for our sleigh ride up the river," exclaimed Mr. Gray, as his party reached the hotel.

He glanced at his watch, and then turned to Marion.

"I did not think to tell you that our home is upon the opposite bank of the river, and that our servants are always there, both summer and winter," he said, pleasantly. "It is really only a country villa, but we love it, wife and I, and we have a steam launch, the *Dunathlyn* on the river in summer."

"We will take the young ladies over to the villa and give them some luncheon," spoke up his wife; "that is, if they are not afraid to cross the Niagara. You see, dears," she went on, "our home is ten miles from here, and just at present the river is open; furthermore, we have our own boat and a very safe boatman."

"I shall not be afraid, if you are not," said Marion, promptly. "Of course, we would not come if there were any danger."

"It is dangerous when the ice is running, or with an inexperienced oarsman," said Mr. Gray, "but we are very cautious, and, so far, nothing has happened. We have lived for years on the banks of the Niagara."

"So long as we get back to Buffalo in time for the performance we shall be delighted to

go wherever you will take us," was Marion's eager reply, for she was thoroughly delighted with the charming couple.

"Yes, we must be on time," chimed in Miss Allyn; "but it is only three o'clock now, and the performance begins at eight-thirty; that will give us plenty of time, will it not?"

"Plenty," answered Mr. Gray; "that is, if they give me good horses. I don't wonder that you feel nervous over what may occur this evening."

"Yes, it will be advisable for us to be on hand early," said Miss Allyn, soberly. "It would be dreadful to add to Mr. Temple's anxieties! Just think how worried he would be if you were a minute late, Marion!"

"Well, we'll see how long it takes us to drive up," said Mr. Gray, cheerily. The next moment he was in the hotel office, ordering a team from the livery stable. As they drove away from the hotel three persons were watching them from one of the office windows. They were Rose and his two friends, with their well-filled cameras.

As soon as the sleigh was out of sight Rose spoke in a low voice, so that no one but his companions could hear him.

"Now our game is to see that she doesn't get back. She's gone for a long ride, so the thing is dead easy."

"And, meanwhile, we'll have our new beauty made up to look as much like Miss Marlowe as possible," said one of the fellows; "and who is to dispute the name, I'd like to know. Why, there may be a dozen Marion Marlowes in the world. The name is not copyrighted!"

"We scared that fellow, Jones, in great shape," answered the other one; "he'd tell us her movements for the next month if he knew them, the sinner!"

"It's lucky there happens to be a traitor in their camp; our plans would have fallen through if there hadn't been," was the answer.

After that there was a low, whispered conversation, and the three friends parted. The two "camera fiends" went back to Buffalo, but Rose hired a single sleigh and started after Marion. He wore a fur cap well down over his face, and did his own driving.

It was only a short time before he caught sight of Mr. Gray's party, after which he kept them in sight without going too near. He was desperately in earnest in his undertaking.

The scenery delighted Marion, and she was in the gayest possible spirits.

The sleighing was excellent, and the glimpses of the river fascinated her. Although Marion and her companions noticed the sleigh behind them, not once did either she or her companions dream that they were being watched by the sleigh's occupant, or that Rippel and Rose would ever resort to downright treachery.

It was while she was enjoying her drive that Mr. Temple succeeded in serving his injunction to restrain his rivals from using her name on their programmes.

He was accompanying his "process server" down one of the side streets of Buffalo when he suddenly saw Rippel walking rapidly just ahead of him.

There was a record breaking but almost noiseless "sprint" on the part of the officer, and Mr. Rippel was put in possession of the paper. He turned and faced Mr. Temple with an insolent laugh.

"Do you suppose that bit of paper will make any difference to me?" he asked, bluntly. "Well, you don't know me very well! Why, I meet those things all over the country! A fellow out in Indianapolis tried to stop me last week, but I not only gobbled his star, but played in his theatre!"

He grinned with the greatest impudence as he delivered this statement, but Mr. Temple greeted his manner with one of chilling dignity.

"It will not be well for you to try that with me," he said, quietly; "that sort of thing may go in the West, but if you attempt it here, you will pay dearly for your experiment."

"Pay nothing," said the man, with another impudent grin. "Why, we've got a dozen judgments hanging over our heads now! Don't worry us a bit. We ain't worth a penny!"

"I should know that by your methods," said Mr. Temple, disgustedly. "You are merely a couple of tricksters, who are trying to make a living dishonestly. I have no

mercy on you, but I am sorry for your company."

Mr. Temple turned on his heel to walk away, but, in a second, he discovered that his enemy was following him.

"What do you say to a compromise?" asked Rippel, slyly; "say we borrow Miss Marlowe between your acts. She could just do a specialty, you know; we are not particular."

"Anything to make good your bluffs, I suppose," said Mr. Temple, sneeringly. "Well, let me tell you right here that you haven't money enough in your treasury to hire Miss Marlowe for a minute! She's an honest woman, who wants nothing to do with shysters! Unless I am very much mistaken, she told your partner as much this morning."

"Well, she may have told him something different by this time," said the fellow, glancing at his watch. "He is interviewing her at Niagara this minute, and will make her a better offer!"

"Which she will refuse, as she did the other," said Mr. Temple, proudly; then he hastened his steps in order to get rid of the fellow.

Bert Jackson was looking for him when he got back to the hotel.

"Where is Miss Marlowe?" was Temple's first question when he saw his comedian.

"Gone to Niagara. She and Miss Allyn have an invitation for a sleighride, I believe," was the answer; "but what's the matter, old man? Is there any more trouble?"

Mr. Temple consulted his timepiece, and then spoke decidedly.

"Go to Niagara at once, Jackson, and try to find Miss Marlowe! Those two fellows, Rippel and Rose, are determined to get the best of us. Heaven only knows what they may do to Marion in order to accomplish their purpose!"

Bert's boyish face paled, but his lips only closed tightly.

"Heaven forbid that she should have any more adventures so soon," he said, anxiously, "I'll go on the next train, Mr. Temple, and you can mark my words, when I get a glimpse of her, I shall follow her like a shadow!"

"I'll be there myself as soon as possible," replied the manager. "I'm just going over to the Alhambra to see what is being done. When I was over last, there were only fifty advance sales, but there were a lot of people stopping to ask questions."

"The first afternoon paper is out. Hold on a minute, Mr. Temple!" cried Bert, as he happened to catch sight of a newsboy just at that moment. He bought a copy and scanned the columns carefully.

"Hello! Here's a whole column with a big scare head about the 'Rivalry of the Two Theatrical Companies!' As if we would ever stoop to become rivals of such a bum combination!"

"What do they say?"

Mr. Temple asked the question anxiously.

Bert ran his eye down the column and promptly answered:

"That Marion Marlowe came to Buffalo with us, but there is still reason to believe that she has been bought over. The editor calls us a 'reputable company,' but says that 'Rippel and Rose bear a bad reputation,' and that their advertisements are not to be trusted."

"Good for him! I'll go around and treat him to-morrow! But what have you struck now?" he asked, as he saw a change come over Bert's features.

Bert held up the paper and then read off the paragraph.

"'In spite of the fact that our vanquished rivals insist that Miss Marion Marlowe is still star of their company, Messrs. Rippel and Rose beg to say to the public that this beautiful and talented actress has been secured by them, and that she will not appear in the enemy's camp again, but will scintillate this evening upon the boards of the Palace Theatre. It may be stated, without any breach of confidence, that Miss Marlowe will receive three hundred dollars for this one appearance, instead of for one week, as has been previously stated.'"

"Whew! I wonder if they expect to go into bankruptcy after they have paid her," laughed Bert, as he finished the paragraph.

"They are persistent rascals," said Mr. Temple, musingly; "and there is nothing to be done but to keep strict watch over Marion."

"I'm off this minute," cried Bert, as he started for the station; then he happened to think of something and turned back for a minute.

"By the way, Mr. Temple, I don't like that fellow, Jones! He's as two-faced as they make! I wish you would keep your eye on him, if you see him around the city."

Mr. Temple looked at him questioningly; so Bert explained what Marion had told him about the two camera fiends and how reluctant Jones had been in coming to her assistance.

"As like as not he's in with the other company," said Mr. Temple, quickly. "I know next to nothing about him, except that he is a very fair actor. The first good 'supe' I ever saw whose head didn't swell the minute he was given a part. I had been congratulating myself that Jones was a treasure."

"Well, all treasures should be guarded," said Bert, very sagely; "but now I'm off to hunt up Marion!"

"There's a train in ten minutes!" called Mr. Temple after him, but Bert was already so far away that he did not hear him.

CHAPTER VII.

A HIDEOUS MESSAGE.

Mr. Temple was still standing near the box office of the Alhambra, wondering what he could do next to increase the advance sales, when a boy in messenger's uniform came in and handed him an envelope.

He tore it open with a look of indifference; then an exclamation burst from his lips and he carefully re-read the message.

"Have decided to accept offer made me by Mr. Rose to-day at Niagara."

The telegram was signed simply, "Marion Marlowe."

Mr. Temple gasped. It had come to him like a thunderbolt. So Ripple had been right: the three hundred had bribed her!

In less than five minutes Mr. Temple had ordered the box office closed and, without posting so much as a word of explanation, started off to find the members of his company.

With the exception of the property man, stage manager and one "supe," there was not one of them to be found in Buffalo. The nearness of the famous waterfall had tempted them to Niagara.

As he passed the Palace Theatre, the manager saw, with chagrin, that Rippel and Rose were still selling seats rapidly and, walking up to one of the theatre attachés, whom he saw standing on the pavement, he tried to say as indifferently as possible: "Can you tell me if the Rippel and Rose Company have arrived, and at what hotel they are stopping?"

The fellow looked up at him with a knowing grin.

"Yep; jest come!" he said, good-naturedly; "and they've got her, as sure as shooting. Deucedly pretty girl, too, that Miss Marion Marlowe!"

Mr. Temple walked on. It did not seem possible. In a few minutes he began wondering what Bert Jackson would say when he saw Marion's telegram. It was a bitter disappointment to him to lose his star, particularly to such a third-class combination as that of his rivals.

But, strangely enough, he did not doubt the genuineness of the telegram. In spite of all he knew of Marion, he did not understand her. She had gone over to the enemy; he believed that absolutely. There was nothing more now for him to do at the theatre.

It was impossible to secure an actress to take Marion's place at that hour, so he started for the telegraph office, in order to engage one to join him as soon as possible.

Of course, he could have substituted Miss Ellis, but his pride would not allow it. He had advertised Miss Marlowe as his principal attraction, and it seemed to him wiser to take his defeat squarely, rather than to stoop to subterfuge and apologies to the public.

Just as he reached the telegraph office a dozen or more boys came tumbling out. In an instant he saw that something unusual had happened.

Catching one of the blue-coated urchins by the shoulder, he stopped him quickly.

"What's the matter, sonny? Is the town on fire?" he asked, pleasantly.

"Lemme go! Don't you see I'm in a hurry?" bawled the boy, excitedly; then he suddenly changed his mind and halted long enough to answer.

"Naw! It ain't no fire! It's somebody comin' down ther Rapids an' goin' sure pop over ther Falls! There's lots on 'em done it, but I ain't never seen one! I'd give er dollar if I could only git there!"

He started off again with a disappointed look upon his face and, before Mr. Temple could think what to do, quite a crowd had gathered before the door of the telegraph office.

"The same old story, I reckon! Some bloomin' idiot has lost his oar a tryin' ter cross the river up above," said a lusty voice. "There's lots of folks that ain't got no more sense. I've seen two myself come through the Rapids."

"But they say there's a woman in this boat," spoke up another voice; "but, of course, that may be only a rumor! Bad news travels fast, and it doesn't lose anything in its traveling, either!"

Mr. Temple forced his way into the office, thinking he might learn something more definite. As he edged his way to the desk, he caught sight of Mr. Rippel.

A man in uniform was sitting at one of the telegraph instruments, and raising his hand for silence, he read off the latest message to a couple of newspaper reporters.

"A man and woman are drifting down toward the Rapids in a small boat. They were first seen at a point about five miles above Goat Island, but, owing to the ice on the shore, no one could get near them."

There was a death-like silence in the room while the message was being read, then the crowd dispersed, the men shaking their heads wisely.

"I wish there was a train that would get up there in time," said a comic-looking man, as he passed Mr. Temple. "There's lots gone over the Falls, but I ain't never seen none on 'em [illegible] too late now, though, if they're comin' the Rapids."

"Great Heavens! How dreadful!" muttered Mr. Temple to himself.

He was [illegible] who had spoken. His face had a drawn look, as though the news had upset him.

Mr. Temple walked away; he did not care to talk with him. He was still thinking bitterly of the way Marion had treated him.

A dozen steps from the telegraph office he was suddenly confronted by Jones. The fellow was wringing his hands and his face looked deathly pale.

"What the dence——?" began Mr. Temple, but the fellow interrupted him.

"Oh, can't something be done to stop them, Mr. Temple? They mustn't go over the Falls! It would be horrible! Horrible!"

Mr. Temple looked at him in sympathy. The news had evidently completely unnerved him. He had never given the fellow credit before for having so much feeling.

"I am afraid nothing can save them, Jones. In fact, they may have gone over before this," he said, very soberly.

With a fearful groan, Jones began cowering on the sidewalk before him.

"Good Heavens! What does this mean? What ails you, fellow!" cried the manager, with the first breath of suspicion coming over him. "What do you know of this matter? Quick! Speak up this minute! There's something on your conscience, or you wouldn't have gone to pieces so completely!"

He seized the fellow by the shoulder and shook him soundly. Jones was on the verge of a fit, but he was determined to get the truth out of him before he collapsed altogether.

With a fearful rolling of the eye-balls, the actor managed to stammer out his answer.

"Rose followed her up the river," he muttered. "He did not mean to do anything but detain her, I'm sure, but if there's a boat coming down——" He could go no farther.

He began clutching at his throat in a paroxysm of perfect terror. For just one second Mr. Temple stood like one petrified, then a sudden determination seemed to quicken his faculties.

There was a policeman standing near, and the manager called to him.

"Keep your eye on this man until I get back," he said, hoarsely; "he's got a hidden knowledge of a crime. He knows who is in that boat that is coming down the river!"

Don't let him escape! I'll make my complaint later!"

He darted away, studying a time-table as he went. There was no train for an hour, and an hour seemed an eternity.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT THE MERCY OF THE WATERS.

Never will the people of Niagara forget the horrors of that day!

Unfortunates had drifted over the Falls before, but it was rarely that any one was warned of the tragedy in time to satisfy their desire to see it.

The more sober residents flocked together and discussed the chances of the boat ever being seen again, but the Sister Island was the objective point for hundreds, although it was a wild, rough scramble to reach the frozen bank of the river.

Dr. Brookes was one of the first to reach the extreme end of the island and, after an hour of watching had passed, he was joined by Bert, who had just reached Niagara, and had followed the excited crowd that swarmed in that direction.

There was only a nod, and then Bert joined the crowd of anxious watchers.

The unfortunate craft must pass that way on her ride to doom, but nearly two hours passed and there was not a sign of her.

"She's caught somewhere in the ice on the bank," suggested some one; "perhaps the poor creatures have crawled ashore, but it's hardly probable!"

The enormous crowd upon the island dwindled away little by little, and Bert and the doctor were about to return also, when they were joined by several gentlemen whom they had seen in the hotel at Buffalo.

"Is there any more news?" asked Bert, quickly; "any word that the boat has gone ashore or anything?"

"Not that I've heard," was the reply, as the gentlemen scanned the icy water. "If the boat was where they say it was, she was probably swamped by the ice and has gone to the bottom."

"Then there's no use to stay here any longer," said Bert, who was blue with the cold. "This spot must be gorgeous in summer, but it is bleak enough now! I can understand how that old gentleman at the hotel said the water looked cruel!"

"The Rapids are merciless, once they seize upon their prey," said another voice. "Why, the whirlpool down below is far more pitiful, it sucks you in at once and almost like a flash of lightning, but these Rapids resemble a cat and a mouse; they toss you up and buffet you about—they give you a glimpse of sunshine and then engulf you!"

"But could they not have been saved farther up the stream?" asked Bert, anxiously. "They tell me the boat started some distance above the Rapids."

The man did not answer: he was scanning the water.

He had lived at Niagara all his life, and knew every tragedy of the Rapids.

"They just go down and over," he went on, after a minute; "and a day or two later they are thrown ashore way down the stream, so bruised and battered that their best friends would not know them."

His hearers shuddered, but they knew he spoke truthfully. The water looked quite capable of just such diabolical treachery.

"I hope Miss Marlowe did not see them! It would almost kill her," remarked the doctor, anxiously, as he scanned the rushing waters; "she rode up, you know, and must have been in plain sight of the river at several points. I only hope it is all a hoax—it is too horrible to be real."

"And yet it has happened before; you know what the old gentleman told us," said Bert, soberly.

"The young lady was going to visit Mr Gray, was she not?" asked a familiar voice.

Bert looked around and saw the same old gentleman whom he had just quoted. He was surprised to see him there, but he did not say so.

"Yes, I believe she was," he answered, in some wonder.

The old man shrugged his shoulders and a strange look crossed his face.

"The Gray villa is on the other side, and those fellows that row across are mighty careless sometimes," he muttered, almost angrily; "I hope the young lady has not met with misfortune."

Bert stared in horror for the space of a second; the next moment some one came up behind him and touched him on the shoulder. He turned and confronted his manager, Mr. Temple.

"Pshaw! Don't croak!" he tried to say, but his voice trembled curiously.

Dr. Brookes had heard the words, and his face had paled instantly, but he laid his hand on his young friend's shoulder, encouragingly.

"They are too far up for that—don't think of it, Bert," he said, quickly. "Mr. Gray is not the man to take his guests into danger."

He put his hands over his eyes as he spoke and looked sharply across the water. He was trying not to show how the old gentleman's words had startled him.

The Rapids were still churning and foaming, and now and then a cake of ice went rushing by, but there was no sign of a boat, as far as he could see. Evidently something had stopped it, or turned its course entirely.

Bert was standing by Mr. Temple now and, without a word, the manager showed him Marion's telegram.

The youth gave a whistle of surprise and an indignant exclamation passed his lips. If it had been his nature, he would have given way to profanity; but, as it was, he managed to calm himself with an effort.

"What have you done?" he asked, with a puzzled look on his face.

"Given up as beaten and closed the theatre! What else was there for me to do?" was the disconsolate answer.

"Great Scott! You don't mean to say that you believed it!" Bert almost shouted. "Why, man! I tell you it is a lie! A base, infernal lie! Marion never sent that telegram, if she is in her sane and sober senses!"

"But Rose saw her here at Niagara," began Mr. Temple.

"Yes, and followed her, they tell me, when she started off with the Grays. He probably meant to see her again and offer her more but——"

There was a sudden break in Bert's voice, and just then some one spoke near him.

"It's about a two-mile current, I reckon; she ought to have been here long ago if she started from Gray's villa."

The words were ominous. There was no mistaking their meaning.

As he gazed into Mr. Temple's ashen face, he seemed to understand the situation.

"Oh, Mr. Temple! It can't be possible. He would not harm her!" he whispered, cautiously. "He might try to detain her—to keep her from appearing at the Alhambra, but no man, no matter how vile he was, could do such a thing as that!"

He glanced at the Rapids again with horrified eyes, and Mr. Temple's hand seemed like lead on his shoulder.

"Rose may have tried to detain her; Jones said that was his intention," he added, huskily; "and there might have been an accident, Bert! We can only wait——"

"I'll wait for nothing!" muttered Bert, clenching his fists. "If Marion goes over the Falls, I will go over with her, but I don't believe it, Mr. Temple! I won't believe it! That is all there is about it!"

"Neither will I until I have to," said Mr. Temple, in the same cautious voice. "Don't let us allow ourselves to think such a thing, if we can help it!"

The doctor was standing where he could not hear them, and now both Bert and Mr. Temple stared silently at the foaming water.

Suddenly there was a shriek from some one, that was echoed by a hundred throats. The vigil had been long, but it was about to be rewarded.

Something had been seen in the seething waters; it was a boat, bottom up, and tossing wildly.

The horror was real; it had been no hoax. In an instant the cold was forgotten and every eye was strained across the churning waters.

"Empty! They have gone down, poor souls!"

It was the solemn old man who spoke the words.

Bert set his teeth together hard and looked around for the doctor.

"Don't tell him—it's no use," whispered Mr. Temple, in his ear; "let us wait for proof before we distress him."

Bert nodded his head. There was a——ate look in his eyes. Not for

would he allow himself to believe that anything had happened to Marion.

After that first prolonged shriek, there was hardly a sound.

In their excitement, the people almost ceased to breathe, but their eyes followed the craft with feverish interest.

Some poor soul had gone down and was, perhaps, at that moment, being dashed over the Falls! As they gazed, wide-eyed, the group of onlookers shuddered.

Now a glimpse of the boat's bottom could be seen above the water; then a huge piece of ice would take its place; then the waters would churn and dash and foam, and another glimpse of the doomed craft would reward their watching.

Suddenly a monster wave caught the boat and turned it toward the island. There was a grating and crunching of the ice upon the shore; then it was flung high upon the icy rim that encircled the island and the waters swept by, leaving it wrenched and shattered.

A moment of breathless silence followed this thrilling scene; then a native of the river bank turned and faced the group that surrounded him.

"I know that boat," he said, with almost a groan. "She belongs to the *Dauntless*, one of the steam launches on the river. Her owner is Herbert Gray, a fine old gentleman; his home is up the bank a few miles; they call it Gray villa."

CHAPTER IX.

A CLEVER BARGAIN.

At the very moment when her friends were staring in horror at what they supposed was almost proof of her death, Marion Marlowe returned from her sleighride up the river.

There was a train from Niagara Falls which would bring them into Buffalo at seven-thirty, and Mr. Gray and his wife intended following on the next train after, which would enable them to reach the theatre at the rising of the curtain.

On the train they heard the first rumor of the thrilling tragedy, but neither Marion nor Miss Allyn dreamed of the true situation. It was the greatest surprise to find, on their return to Buffalo, that there was not a member of the company about the hotel, and, moreover, the Alhambra Theatre was as dark as a camera, while the Palace Theatre was brilliantly lighted.

"I can't understand it, Alma!" Marion remarked, as soon as they reached their room. "What in the world has happened since we have been gone? Has the manager absconded and taken the balance of the company with him?"

Alma Allyn shook her head with an anxious frown.

"I can't understand it, either, Marion! Why, the box office should be open, at all events! There was a perfect crowd of people at our rival's theatre!"

Marion burst out laughing, as a thought of Rose entered her mind.

"Just think of his offering me three hundred dollars, Alma! Why, how in the world could they pay me so much money!"

"You'd probably have to sue them to collect it," said Miss Allyn, disdainfully. "They are determined to make money on their one-night stands evidently, and they don't mind how many lies they tell to do it."

"Well, they'll make no money out of me, if I can help it," said Marion, firmly. "Why, there's nothing that would tempt me to join their ranks. I may be an actress, but I am not an unprincipled one, and never will I associate with unprincipled people. If a girl cannot earn her living on the stage without losing her sense of honor, she had better give it up and try another vocation. Of course, there are some things in the plays that grate on me a little, but every one knows they are plays, so it really does not matter; still, I would not play a part where the character was really immoral."

"Of course not! And to think that Rippel and Rose should expect you to join their combination! Why, they play nothing but farces, with specialties thrown in, and there's a suspicion of vulgarity in all their plays, they tell me."

"Well, when I change, it will be for something better, not worse," said Marion, firmly. "I just long to play Rosalind and Juliet, and to think of their trying to bribe me to do

a song and dance or fill in time between the acts of some immoral farce or drama!"

"They know better, now," said Miss Allyn, smiling. "When you called Rose a 'cur' at the Falls to-day I saw his face turn crimson. I fancy he knows by this time that you are not of his order of being."

"Do you know, I can't help thinking that the fellow that followed us to-day was one of their company," said Marion, as she began her toilet. "He kept behind us so persistently and then disappeared so suddenly. I may have been mistaken, but I thought his actions were suspicious."

"So did I," said Miss Allyn, as she started brushing her hair; "but they were not half as suspicious as are our own managers, just at present! What in the world does he mean by not having the theatre open?"

Marion did not reply, but her eyes looked her anxiety.

Miss Allyn rose as she spoke and rang the bell vigorously. When the boy from the office responded she spoke to him anxiously.

"Has Mr. Temple, or any of the members of his company, come in since we came? If they have, tell them to come up here—Miss Marlowe wants to see them!"

The boy started from the door and then suddenly stood still.

"Which Miss Marlowe is it?" he asked, a little stupidly. "There's two on 'em in the hotel, miss. One came this mornin' and one this evenin'."

Miss Allyn's eyes flew open, but she did not hesitate an instant.

"Tell the one that came this evening that the one that came this morning would like to see them, and look here, boy, don't fail to bring her up. Here's a quarter for your trouble. If you bring her in, I'll make it fifty."

"All right, miss. I'll do my best!" and the bell-boy, grinning, shut the door. Miss Allyn turned toward Marion and they both stared at each other. "So that's the secret of the whole affair!" cried Miss Allyn, finally. "The bad fellow has succeeded in discovering another Marion Marlowe!"

"It certainly looks like it," said Marion, [illegible] "but, of course, if that is the case [illegible] to be done. They have a right to advertise her as much as they wish, Alma!"

"Well, I don't believe it," said her friend, growing angry. "There's only one Marion Marlowe! This new one is a fake!"

Marion slowly began to dress. The mystery of the closed theatre was worrying her dreadfully.

"A quarter of eight! We ought to start, Alma," she said, suddenly. "Did you ever hear of anything so strange. Now, what in the world has become of Mr. Temple?"

There was a tap on the door, and Miss Allyn hurried to open it. Miss Lee, the soubrette of the Temple Company, was standing in the door. She had just returned from Niagara, and her eyes were red with weeping.

"Oh, Miss Lee! What has happened?" began Marion, but the soubrette interrupted her. With a shriek of perfect delight, she clasped both arms around the young girl's shoulders.

"Oh, Miss Marlowe! We thought you were dead!" she sobbed, hysterically. "We thought you were drowned in those awful Rapids! Oh, I can't believe it! I can't believe it!"

Marion's cheeks turned pale, but she spoke with unusual firmness:

"What in the world do you mean, Miss Lee? Why, I have not been in a boat to-day! It was too late to cross the river to Mr. Gray's villa when we reached the little hamlet, so we came right back in order to be on time for the performance. Compose yourself, please, and tell me what you mean by thinking me in the Rapids."

Pearl Lee wiped her eyes, but her voice still trembled. The excitement of the day had been almost unbearable, but she made a brave effort to calm herself as she answered:

"A boat came down through the Rapids and was thrown ashore"—she began, bravely. "And some one recognized it as belonging to the gentleman, Mr. Gray, with whom we thought you were crossing the river, and—and—

"She could not go further for tears and sobs. They were tears of joy that her fears were unfounded.

"Is that why the theatre is closed?" asked Miss Allyn, anxiously. "Oh, Marion! go to

as not that is the very reason! Some one has started the report that you were drowned, and it is probably Rippel and Rose! It would be just like them!"

"The boat must have gone adrift! You know, Mr. Gray told us he expected some one to meet him," said Marion, slowly; then she suddenly sprang to her feet and an expression of firm determination overspread her features.

"I must do something at once, if that is the case," she said, decidedly; "I'll go down and sit in the box office myself! Oh, Alma, do think of some way that we can outwit our enemies!"

Miss Allyn paced the floor, with her brows contracted. It was an emergency that called for more than usually quick action.

The curtain at the Alhambra should rise at eight-thirty, and, at the present moment, there was no inkling of the whereabouts of the manager.

"Hurry, Alma! Let's get out where the people can see us!" cried Marion, hurrying for her hat. "I am determined that the Alhambra shall be lighted on time! Not ten minutes longer shall it remain in darkness!"

She started for the door and had one foot on the threshold, when she was confronted by the bell-boy and a very pretty young lady.

"I got her!" blurted the boy, with a wink at Miss Allyn. "She's ther one you wanted —Miss Marlowe No. 2. I reckon I've earned that other quarter."

Miss Allyn gave it to him and then looked steadily at their guest.

"So you are the young lady who has borrowed Miss Marlowe's name, are you?" she asked, pleasantly. "Well, do come in; we are delighted to see you! Don't be a bit alarmed. Rippel and Rose are the miscreants who have put you up to it. We know you are not responsible!"

The young lady flushed slightly, but entered without hesitation.

The moment the door was closed behind her, she made a most astonishing statement.

"So you are here, after all, Miss Marlowe! Well, I'm mighty glad of it! Mr. Rose swore by all that was holy that he'd keep you from coming, and, of course, that would have made me the only Marion Marlowe, and with a job on my hands that I would never have been paid for!"

"You mean that you have been hired to impersonate Marion?" asked Miss Allyn, shrewdly.

"That's it, exactly! I'm a mimic," was the laughing answer. "I've got Miss Marlowe down fine, if I do say so. A clever trick of my managers, don't you think so, ladies?"

"It wasn't bad," said Miss Allyn, dryly; "but your game is up now; you shall not mimic our artist!"

"What on earth do you mean?" asked the young girl, staring.

Marion smiled at her sweetly, as she placed her hand on her shoulder.

"She means that you shall do your specialty on our stage, instead of at the Palace, and, what is more, you shall be well paid—I will personally guarantee that."

"Say! Will I get a steady job?" asked the mimic, eagerly.

"Just as long as your contract states. I will tell Mr. Temple to engage you to-morrow. Of course, the length of the engagement will depend altogether on your ability."

The girl gave a whoop of delight and then hugged Marion rapturously.

"Thank fortune I've got a chance at last to turn down those loafers!" she cried, happily; "and I'll mimic any one you say, and do it right, too; any actress you have a mind to mention, but never Marion Marlowe!"

"That settles it! Come in!" said Marion, quickly. "I'm going straight ahead to open the Alhambra!"

Half way down the long corridor another boy met her. He was in messenger uniform and handed her a message from Mr. Gray.

As Marion read it her cheeks paled, and she uttered a low cry. The next moment she thrust it into her pocket and hurried to the theatre.

CHAPTER X.

THE TRAGEDY OF THE RAPIDS.

At exactly eight o'clock Mr. Temple, Bert and Dr. Brookes arrived in Buffalo and walked past the Alhambra on their way to the hotel where the company had been stopping.

They had heard nothing of Marion since Mr. Temple received the telegram, except a rumor in the village that she had been seen since the tragedy.

"I have wired to every point up the river," Mr. Temple was just saying, when he caught sight of the Alhambra. He had left it with closed doors—now it was open and lighted.

"She's safe! I know it!" Bert fairly yelled the words the moment he saw the building. Then there was a rush for the theatre that made the passersby wonder.

As they came directly in front of the entrance all three of the gentlemen stopped short and stared. Some one, they could not guess who, had effected a miracle.

There was a crowd around the box office, and the lobby was filled with people, and, as they looked on, almost in bewilderment, the doctor suddenly made a discovery.

"Look! They've got out a bulletin-board!" he cried, as he pointed to an enormous blackboard that had been rigged directly under the electric lights; and then he proceeded to read off what was written on it in big letters.

"Marion Marlowe Is Here and Not at the Palace! She Will Tell You To-night the Tragedy of the Rapids!"

"Great Scott! And here we've been thinking it was she! Come on, quick, doc, to the stage door!" shouted Bert, hilariously.

"I'll just have a look at the other theatre first," was the doctor's answer. "I'm curious to know what effect this is having on them. I am sure now that Marion is safe! Thank God, the suspense is over!"

He hurried away, while Mr. Temple rushed inside. His man smiled at him from the box-office window in a satisfied manner. Bob Hinton, the calcium man, was just coming out as Mr. Temple entered the auditorium. There was a grin on his face, also, as he tipped his hat to the manager.

"Gee! but Miss Marlowe is a corker!" he said, under his breath. "Why, she came in here like a whirlwind ten minutes ago, and just by luck she found some of us in the lobby. Well, the way she gave orders would have made your hair stand on end, and—well, the theatre will tell you how well we obeyed her!"

"Thank heaven our star has a business head!" was the answer. "Why, I thought first that she had deserted us, and then that she was dead; and here she was all the time attending to my business!"

"She's been bossing me around, all right," said the stage-manager, as he came up; "but everything is O. K. The orchestra can start in a minute."

Mr. Temple rushed out again and gave a few orders. The house was filling rapidly, so there was little for him to do.

A minute later he had gone around to the stage door and was in the scene-room with the stage-carpenter and scene-shifters.

"Oh, Mr. Temple! What do you think of my ability as a stage-manager?" called out a sweet voice from the head of the narrow stairs that led to the dressing-rooms.

Mr. Temple could not answer for the space of a second, but he bounded up the stairs and caught Marion's two hands in a grateful clasp.

"Oh, Miss Marlowe! And I thought you had deserted me!"

As he spoke the words he pulled the telegram from his pocket and held it under a gas-jet, where she could read it.

In an instant the fair girl's face was crimson with anger. She took the bit of yellow paper and glared at it furiously.

"I'll pay him up for that——" she began, and then stopped suddenly. "Rose sent that message, Mr. Temple," she went on, more quietly; "and, furthermore, the fellow sent it after I had scorned his offer. But he has been punished for his sin, the poor, unfortunate fellow!"

Mr. Temple looked at her inquiringly, and Marion whispered a few words of explanation; then, before he could reply, she was obliged to change the subject.

There was something else that he must know at once—a detail of her "business managing" that would surprise him considerably.

"I have hired their 'Marion Marlowe,'" she whispered cautiously. "They really had one, you know, but she was only a mimic. I thought it was the best way to outwit them completely."

Mr. Temple looked at the radiant face in silent admiration. It was a clever move, and he appreciated it keenly.

As she leaned toward him on the stairs, her great gray eyes were luminous with excitement and her cheeks were like roses.

"Miss Marlowe—Marion!" he whispered, almost unconsciously. The next instant a great wave of love for the brave girl seemed suddenly to overcome him. With an impulse that he could not control he touched his lips to her forehead.

Marion lifted her head quickly, but she did not speak. His actions had confused her; but she understood it perfectly.

"They're completely demoralized at the Palace," called out Dr. Brookes at that moment. "They say that Rose is missing and Rippel half crazy; and they say also that Miss Marlowe has queered them. Do you know how, Hinton?"

"Come up here and I'll tell you!" called out Marion, softly.

The doctor sprang up the stairs and pushed by the manager. The next second he had Marion in his arms and was kissing her tenderly.

An ugly light flashed across the manager's face. He descended the stairs without a word, but with the anger still upon his features. It was no news to him that Dr. Brookes loved Marion, but it came to him now with a tenfold bitterness; for he had only learned in the past hour how deeply he loved her himself. When he thought her dead the grief had nearly killed him. When he found her alive and safe his heart seemed to leap within him. To him she had suddenly become the one woman in the world, and, as he went back to "the front," he vowed that no one should take her from him."

Yet in his agony of the moment he could hardly blame the doctor. No doubt his anxiety over Marion had nearly maddened him, and the tender caress was born of uncontrollable happiness.

The orchestra had started now, and still the people flocked in. They had become satisfied at last at which theatre they would find the attraction.

As Mr. Temple lingered in the lobby he learned other reasons for this sudden decision on the part of the public, but the last seat in the house had been sold before he fully understood it.

"Some one started the story that she was in that boat," explained the ticket man, as he closed his window at last and came out in the lobby.

"I don't know who did it, but I think it was Jones. He's been locked up in the station-house for several hours—did you know that, Mr. Temple?"

The manager started as though he had been shot. He had entirely forgotten that there was such a fellow in creation.

"Then who is playing his part?" he asked, with a feeling of dismay.

"Oh, Miss Marlowe fixed that," was the astonishing answer. "As soon as the stage-manager told her, she corralled another villain—the stage-manager himself, if you please, Mr. Temple!"

"Great Lucifer! Can he act?" was the astonished ejaculation.

"Who couldn't act with Miss Marlowe to coach him?" retorted the man. "Why, I was tempted to go on myself. I would, if she had asked me!"

"Thank the Fates she didn't!" said Mr. Temple. "Deering will be bad enough, but you would have queered us entirely."

There was a thunder of applause now, so he went into the auditorium again, standing away back in the rear, where he could look over his audience.

Marion Marlowe was before the footlights, looking more beautiful than he had ever seen her, and, as the applause died out, she suddenly addressed the audience.

"I am Marion Marlowe," she said, very simply. "My name has been bandied about so much to-day that it is only fair that I should tell you. There is no other actress at the present day who bears my name that I know of; but there is one young lady who imitates me, I believe, and her managers have been pleased to call her Marion Marlowe."

There was another outburst of applause as the young girl paused, and then, with a graceful gesture, she begged them to be silent.

"There is something that I am sure will interest you," she said, soberly. "Perhaps you read on the bulletin outside that I knew the 'Tragedy of the Rapids.' Well, I do, or so far, perhaps, as it will ever be known; but

I am going to ask you to allow some one else to tell you the story."

Her voice trembled a little and the people understood her. The frightful tragedy was too recent for her to speak of it calmly.

As she finished, Mr. Gray rose from his seat in one of the stage boxes. His figure was so commanding that it could be seen by every one.

"I will tell you briefly what has happened," he began, distinctly. "An hour ago, at Niagara Falls, I was told that one of the boats belonging to my steam launch, the *Dauntless*, had drifted down the river. I immediately wired to my villa and learned that the boat was missing. It had either been cut from its moorings by floating ice or deliberately stolen by some vicious person. Another telegram tells me that the latter is the case. The boat was stolen by some one who supposed that both my guests and myself were on the other side, and it was done in order to detain Miss Marlowe, so that she would not be able to appear at the Alhambra this evening. The man who stole my boat was Robert Rose. Whether he was in her when she capsized is at present a mystery."

There was a murmur of horror through the house as the gentleman sat down, for the audience seemed to have grasped the full situation immediately.

CHAPTER XI.

EXPLANATIONS.

Mr. Temple was shocked and astonished as he listened to Mr. Gray's startling words, but the conditions existing at the other theatre were explained at last.

They had probably learned of the fate which had attended the vicious act of their manager, and had promptly retired from the field of treacherous competition.

As the curtain rose on the first act of their pretty melodrama Mr. Temple was still thinking deeply, but his audience was waiting in breathless interest for the reappearance of Marion.

Her magnificent beauty and simple speech had won their hearts, and this act of treachery nobly had endeared her truly added to their esteem.

Her appearance in the title *rôle* was greeted enthusiastically, and almost before she spoke they were under the spell of her magnetic beauty and queenly presence.

There was an earnestness in her voice that thrilled them to the soul, and, in the scene of her first meeting with her lover, Mr. Temple felt, as he had never felt before, the wonderful charm of her genius.

Half way through the first act the "villain" appeared, but it was not the stage-manager, nor any one that resembled him.

What the audience may have thought, no one could tell; but Mr. Temple, with his experience, knew at once that the new acquisition was a woman.

He stared a little at first, but he was soon over his nervousness. Whoever she was there was no mistake about her cleverness. Marion had barely told him of her promise to their rival's "mimic," so it did not occur to him that it was the new member of the company who was before him.

Of course, there was some prompting and hesitation, but she filled the *rôle* admirably, and, at the close of the third act, both she and Marion were called before the curtain.

Both bowed and smiled, but the applause continued. Some one in the house evidently had a suspicion of the truth, and was determined to force an explanation.

At last Marion turned and took the "villain's" hand. It was a ludicrous situation, but her manner was thrilling.

"Stage villains are not always as bad as they look," she began, smilingly; "and this particular villain, ladies and gentlemen, is a very nice person indeed—so nice, in fact, that the Temple Theatrical Company has engaged her permanently, although she has been advertised all day to be in the cast at the Palace."

There was a gasp from the audience, and then there followed a burst of some shrieking and effective light throwing that could hardly be rivalled in quickness.

Before a word could be spoken the "villain" had disappeared from view, and a smiling young girl stood in her place beside Marion.

"This, ladies and gentlemen of the audience, who has been advertised to appear and [illegible] Miss Marion Marlowe," said Marion.

tinctly. "They neglected, however, to add the exast *rôle* that she assumes, which, I am honored to say, is that of "Marion Marlowe's Mimic!"

There was a burst of applause, and then the play went on. Marion Marlowe had made and kept her place in the hearts of the people, not only by her brilliant talents, but by her womanly generosity toward this girl—a stranger.

At ten o'clock Mr. Temple walked over to the Palace.

Exactly as he expected, the place was closed. There was not a light visible. The attachés of the theatre told him that the company had gone, and that Mr. Rippel firmly believed his partner to be somewhere in the grasp of the icebound Niagara.

It was a terrible doom for a man to meet, but Mr. Temple could not sympathize very deeply; for he felt only contempt for the two unscrupulous fellows.

Such an afternoon as he had passed could not easily be forgotten! He seemed to have aged ten years during that terrible scene at the Rapids.

"I shall never forget my first experience as business manager of a theatrical company," Marion was saying, as he entered. "Why, just think, I not only opened the box office and lighted the theatre, but I had the assurance to construct a villain!"

"And a rattling good one, too!" cried Bert, enthusiastically. "Why, with a little more coaching, she will outshine me, and that must not be allowed to happen, Marion!"

"No one can outshine you, never fear, Bert!" said Marion, sweetly. She had not forgotten the tears in her old friend's eyes when he greeted her that evening.

"What an ending for Rose!" said Miss Allyn, soberly. "Of course, that was he who followed us to-day. Well, I could feel sorry for him if I did not know that he was planning mischief for Marion!"

"He expected to make way with the boat after she had gone across to the villa, so she couldn't get back, or something of that sort; but, just fancy his daring to do his own rowing!" remarked Bob Hinton. "Of course, some one will show up who saw him in the boat. Thank Heaven, it was only a rumor that there was a woman with him!"

"There is a little uncertainty about it all yet," began Marion, sadly.

"Oh, I'm dead sure it was Rose!" broke in Hinton, again. "I called on Jones in the lockup at six o'clock, and he told me a straight story, in spite of the fact that he's half crazy!"

This was news to several of the company, so for the next few minutes Mr. Temple was kept busy making explanations.

"Well, I'm glad the first night is over," said Miss Allyn, suddenly; "but, oh, dear! my whole fun is spoiled by that tragedy! I don't feel that I can ever look at the Falls again; and I had hoped to spend half my time at Niagara."

"And I shall go there just the same," said Marion, firmly. "Somehow, I look upon that accident as a just retribution for sin. If Rose had not been guilty of wrongdoing he would be alive this minute."

"I shall always remember the Falls with gratitude," said Dr. Brookes, with a tender intonation in his voice. "That water song was superb this afternoon, Marion; it had a glorious setting—I shall never forget it!"

"If the spell of her music could only make us forget what has happened," said Miss Ellis, sadly.

"I'd forget my own name if Marion sang to me," chimed in Bert. "Just fancy her singing a love song, doctor!"

"I have—a great many times," answered the young man, calmly.

As he turned from a glance at Marion, he saw Mr. Temple's eyes fixed upon him; but he only smiled at him in open candor.

"That is all we need now, Temple," he said, pleasantly. "If you could bring in a scene with Miss Marlowe singing a cradle song to Little Ruby, your success would be assured in every city you visited."

Marion blushed and smiled, but the others applauded eagerly.

"If Miss Marlowe will do it, I shall be delighted," said Mr. Temple, quickly.

He went forward as he spoke and held out his hand to the doctor.

"Thanks, old man, for your suggestion," he said, very cordially.

A handshake followed that only the two understood.

There were times when, like this evening, Mr. Temple felt bitter toward Dr. Brookes; but down deep in his heart he knew that he both honored and respected the man who loved in silence such a beautiful girl as Marion.

The rest of their stay in Buffalo was uneventful.

It was proven conclusively that Rose was drowned, for, as every one had guessed, he supposed Marion had crossed the river, and after hiring some one to row him across a little distance below the villa, he had taken Mr. Gray's boat and had attempted to row himself back in it.

Jones was liberated later, for he was only a tool, but he was never allowed to rejoin the Temple Theatrical Company.

[THE END.]

At the end of their Buffalo engagement the company went on to Cleveland. Here Marion and her friends were to pass through one of the strangest episodes in their careers. The complete story of their adventures, which occurred at the time of the great street railway strike, will be told in next week's MY QUEEN (No. 16), and will be entitled, "Marion Marlowe in Cleveland; or, The Mystery of the Blood-Red Rose."

PATTERN COLUMN.

By special arrangements with the manufacturers we are enabled to supply the readers of MY QUEEN with the patterns of all garments described or illustrated in this column at TEN CENTS each. Address, "Pattern Column," MY QUEEN, [illegible] William Street, New York City.

In ordering patterns be sure to give size and number.

FASHION NOTES.

Empire jackets of guipure, with the designs outlined in creamy chenille, are among the dainty novelties of the season. Fringes of steel and jet beads are seen on some of the newest wraps.

Narrow ribbon velvet is lavishly used on evening gowns, especially those made of net with flounces, trimmed with graduated rows of velvet. Printed panne ribbon is used on tulle gowns, and so is white velvet ribbon, which is very effective.

A novelty in the bolero shows a Watteau pleat in the back. This style is not to be commended for stout ladies. The belted bolero, set into a band at the waist, also is fashionable and is decidedly smart in appearance.

Pink coral is coming in again; the deep red is not so popular, but the owner of rose pink coral is to be congratulated. It is better to wear it quite by itself, however, as combining it with sparkling gems detracts from its delicate beauty.

Oddly cut cloth boleros appear among the season's fancies, showing curious half sleeves and white satin undersleeves, and flaring Directoire collar lined with satin and edged with panne or plain velvet cut work. Below the jacket shows a corslet girdle, ending at the left side with three pointed straps held by cut steel buckles.

Blue, in all its beautiful shades, is one of the most fashionable colors of the season. Some very attractive examples of the color have appeared among the costumes and fabrics shown at recent fall openings, but the choice dyes are yet among the reserve stock at the importing houses, and will be displayed later on among the tailor cloths.

Fichus after the style of that worn by the "Puritan maid," are still favored adjuncts to dressy gowns. They may be made of mousseline de soie, net, lace or chiffon, and even of the dress fabric, and are draped around the shoulders as if defining a yoke. A fancy pin fastens the fichu at the back, and it is knotted in front.

No. 2345—LADIES' SHIRT WAIST.

(Having fitted lining.)

All-over lace is shown here with a silk foundation, and a very pretty waist it is. The front extends only to the waist, and the lower edge is arranged in gathers, while the sides and back of the outer goods are longer, there being a little fullness at the center back. The plainness is relieved by the double-breasted closing, which is cut in square tabs on the edge. Band trimming is arranged along the outline. The pattern is cut in sizes 32 to 40 inches, bust measure. Size 36 requires 2 3-4 yards of 21-inch material.

NO. 2,362—MISSES' ONE-PIECE CIRCULAR SKIRT.

This is the newest circular skirt design for young girls. For a school girl it would look well in dark blue serge. Any dress material could be used for this style of skirt. The pattern is cut in sizes 12 to 16 years. Size 14 years requires five and one half yards of 27 inch or three yards of 54 inch material, with one piece of narrow braid or nine yards of ribbon velvet, and measures about three and one-quarter yards at the lower edge.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

BY GRACE SHIRLEY

NOTE.—This department is a special feature of this publication, and it will be appreciated, we feel sure, by all our readers. It is conducted by Miss Shirley, whose remarkable ability to answer all questions, no matter how delicate the import, has become well known. Readers of "MY QUEEN" need not hesitate to write her on any subject. Miss Shirley will have their interests at heart and will never refuse her assistance or sympathy. As all letters are answered only through the columns of "MY QUEEN," it is unnecessary to enclose stamps. STREET & SMITH.

"I am deeply in love with a young gentleman, but do not know whether he loves me or not, as he never told me, although he comes to see me almost every evening, and is very nice to me

"Dear Miss Shirley, won't you please tell me what to do to find out whether he loves me or not and what to say? EDITHA H."

This letter is similar to a great number we have received, and the same answer will perhaps serve for all. The young man would probably not come to see you every evening if he did not prefer your society to that of others. The only way that we can suggest for you to make sure that he loves you is to allow some other young man to show you a little attention. If the one you are so deeply in love with has any affection for you, this will possibly induce him to declare it openly. If he does not, we would not allow him to monopolize us every evening, if we were you

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"I have just finished reading No 2 of 'My Queen,' and would like to ask advice of you, Miss Shirley. I had a lover, who loved me dearly, and for nearly a year we have been engaged.

"Two weeks ago we had a quarrel, and I told him he should never come to my home again. But he called one evening and made me listen to what he had to say I knew I had been in the wrong from the first, and the kind way in which he talked to me and told me what I had done, made me look so little to myself, that it made me angrier than ever, and being of a very stubborn disposition I still stuck to it, that I was right and he wrong, with the result that we parted. He has always been the kindest of lovers to me, taking me to shows, dances, etc, and getting me almost anything I said I would like to have. And, in return, I have treated him very shabbily pretty often. He is very proud and won't ask me a second time to take him back, and I feel so miserable. But I hate to tell him he can come again, it would seem as if he was all I could get. I know he would come if I would only tell him I was wrong and ask him to forgive me. Then there is another, a richer one, who wants me to marry him. Miss Shirley, what would you do, marry the rich one, whom I only like and respect, or ask the other, whom I do love dearly, to forgive me? AUDREY"

You have made the mistake that many do in sticking to your point even when you know you are wrong. Your lover, we think, has treated you better than you deserved, and we do not blame him for not asking you to take him back again. The sooner you tell him that you were wrong and ask him to overlook it, the sooner you will regain your own self-respect Do not consider marrying any man unless you love him Riches will not make happiness.

When you have made up with your lover try to avoid quarrels in the future, and, in any case, do not be afraid to say you are wrong if you really are. It is only saying that you are wiser to-day than you were yesterday, after all.

"I have read 'My Queen' and noticed in the correspondence columns how you gave others your kind advice; perhaps you will give me some. I am eighteen years old and am receiving the attention of young men. One of them has proposed to me, and says he will kill himself if I give him 'no' for an answer. To tell the truth, I do not love him. Shall I tell him 'yes'?

"C. A. M."

Do not marry any man whom you do not love Pay no attention to his threats of suicide—the people who talk about such acts very rarely commit them. The man who would use such an argument to induce a young girl to marry him must be a poor specimen of manhood We would advise you to dispense with the attention of this young man, as we doubt very much whether he is worthy of your consideration.

"I read 'My Queen' every week and enjoy it immensely, for it is very interesting. I have read the questions and answers and have concluded to ask you a question, and I hope you will answer it frankly, as you did all the others I met a young man some months ago, and as he afterward said it was a case of love at first sight with him, but it was not with me. I did not like him, but after a time I learned to love him dearly. He asked me to marry him, and I told him 'yes.' He is a fine-looking fellow, but he has a violent temper, and is quite poor, but I believe I love him well enough to marry him. I am sixteen years old. Sometimes I fancy he does not care as much for me as he did at first, and he is very jealous of me if I go out with any other fellow, but

suppose I would feel that way myself if I saw him with another girl. He is twenty years old and a hard worker.

"Please advise me what to do—shall I marry him or not as I am not old enough to judge for myself. PANSY L. E."

We are very glad indeed that you enjoy reading "My Queen" so much and are quite willing to answer your questions.

You are too young to marry, and it seems to us that you are a little doubtful of your own affection for this man. You, perhaps, think you care for him only because you have not seen many men. You are both of you youthful enough to wait a few years before marriage, and during that time you would have an opportunity to become convinced of the sincerity of your affection. No girl of sixteen is either mentally or physically fitted for the responsibilities of married life, and we are very glad you wrote to us before taking so serious a step.

"I have read all your advice in 'My Queen' Weekly and would like to have you answer this question for me. I am nearly seventeen years old and would like you to tell me if it is wrong for me to go with young men, or you might call them boys, as none of them is much older than nineteen. My mother does not think it is proper. She says I am too young. I would not like a steady fellow, but would like to have fun like lots of the girls have. HATTIE R."

Your mother is probably better acquainted with these young men than you are and better able to judge whether they are desirable companions.

You are quite right in not wanting to tie yourself to any one man at present, and the old adage, "There is safety in numbers," holds good in this case.

If you go out with young men, do so in moderation, and there will be nothing actually wrong in a friendly companionship. We would advise you to take your mother's opinion as to which of the young men you know are the most desirable companions for you.

"I am a pretty girl of sixteen, and have many lovers whom I have gained by my countenance. The other evening I met a young gentleman of whom I am very fond and he asked me to go to the opera with him. On our way back to my residence he asked me to run away to New York with him and get married.

"He is a handsome man of nineteen, and as we are both well to do, do you think it would be wrong to accept his offer?

"We love each other dearly. Please advise me to do the right thing. MADELINE H."

We think it would not only be wrong but very foolish for you to run away with this young man. If you love him and are engaged to marry him, you should at once, both of you, tell your parents and gain their consent to your marrying at home.

Do not place too much reliance upon lovers whom you have gained through your good looks, and do not be in haste to marry. Make up your mind to see something of the world and of life before you tie yourself down to matrimonial responsibilities.

If this young man is sure that he loves you, he ought, also, to respect your good name too much to ask you to do anything so foolish and so certain to cast reflection upon your reputation.

"Will you kindly answer a question which is worrying me greatly? Of late I have kept steady company with a man of nineteen, but as I am only fourteen years old, my mother won't allow me to keep company with him, but I meet him every other night. Kindly let me know if I am doing right. I think I am, because I love him dearly. He says he loves me, too. GLADYS F."

We advise you to do exactly as your mother says. You are entirely too young to be "keeping company" with young men, and we think you had better cease meeting this young man at once. Do not meet any one outside of your own home. Leave thoughts of love to others for a few years yet. You are too young to understand what love really means. Spend a few years more with your studies and in cultivating your mind—it will be much more profitable than going about with young men.

"A gentleman who has been waiting on me for some time past and to whom I have written many letters, began going with other girls and we called it 'quits,' and I asked him for my letters, but they were refused.

"I have spent a good deal of time in worrying and thinking over it, and seeing that you had helped so many others, I now turn to you for aid. JEAN."

If the "gentleman" is not gentlemanly enough to return your letters when asked to, we would not bother about them. Let him keep them for the present, and, after a few months, ask him for them casually and, perhaps, by that time he will have lost interest in them and be willing to return them.

In the future, do not write letters that you are not willing the receiver should retain in any event. Never put on paper anything that you do not mean or are afraid to stand back of, but consider, when a letter leaves your hands, that it then becomes the property of another.

"I am a young girl of seventeen. Three young men are paying me attention, two of them have asked me to marry them, but I do not love either.

"The third one has not spoken of love to me, although he has kissed me. Would it be very immodest of me to ask him if he loves me when he wants to kiss me? GLADYS P."

You do not say whether you have any affection for the third young man, although your willingness to kiss him leads us to suppose that you must care something for him.

The surest way for you to find out whether he loves you is to be less free with your kisses. Tell him that you reserve that privilege for your future husband. If the young man really cares for

you he will not long delay saying so. If he does not, and is simply caressing and kissing you because you permit it and not because he values the privilege, the sooner you abandon the practice the better. Retain your kisses for the man who esteems them most highly.

"Although it may seem foolish of me to ask advice in the matter I shall refer to you, still I ask your advice in all sincerity, since it is of such vital importance that trifling would be entirely out of place.

"I am a young girl, eighteen years old I have a friend who has been all a friend could be to me for years. We have had the misfortune to fall in love with the same man. She knows nothing of my love for him, but has often told me in confidence how dear he is to her. Not long since he told me he esteemed me more than any woman in the world, but that next to me he esteemed my friend. What shall I do, take his love and leave my friend? She is so true-hearted that she will love but once. Shall I ruin my own life or my friend's. MAUDE D. A."

If you are really in love with this man and he is in love with you, we fail to see why you should consider spoiling two lives for the sake of one. You are not even sure that the man would marry your friend if you did throw him over. It is certainly a misfortune that she has given her affection to the man who has bestowed his upon you, but that is the way of the world, and you are not in any way to blame.

If you desire this man's love and he offers it to you, accept it by all means. There is no treachery in this to your friend, if you have always been open and candid with her.

"They call me 'an old maid,' so I suppose I am one. It is a hard lot to live, and I am only human and yearn for human love. Can I ever get it and how? How often I think, 'No one to love me and no one to love!' I have never had a lover—my friends tell me to advertise. I think it too public, though I would take most any man just so I could love him. I am fifty-six years old, only, real niee and real pretty. Ought I to advertise? I love Marion Marlowe, for it is she who has stirred the old flame of passion into a magnificent blaze Make her, oh, so very happy! Dolly is so sweet! Pray get Miss Allyn a man, for her life must be so lonely without some male love. I shall look for an answer in your next magazine. AMANDA L. P."

You seem to have arrived at a very seasonable age without falling a victim to Cupid's marksmanship, but as the tiny god is known to be no respecter of persons he may yet send a few arrows in the direction of your heart. You seem to be willing to accept almost any sort of man for a husband, and, if you are as "nice" and "pretty" as you suppose, you ought to be able to attract some lonely soul who yearns as hard as you do. An advertisement would bring answers from an undesirable class of men, and we are surprised that a woman who has reached years of discretion should consider it seriously. We do not think that there is anything very "terrible" in being an old maid.

We are glad that Marion has warmed your heart after all these solitary years, but hope the results will not be detrimental to your peace of mind. Miss Allyn has not shown any signs of loneliness, but is a self-reliant young woman, and will probably be able to survive for the present without a lover.

"I met a young lady friend of mine in the city about a year ago. I moved away, but we have been corresponding with each other ever since. Her grandmother and my grandfather were brother and sister. Do you think we are too nearly related to marry? We love each other dearly. CHARLES G."

While we personally do not approve of even distant relations marrying, we believe that the world at large offers no objections. If you are both in good health and the record for health in preceding generations is also good, there may be no evil results from such a union. We advise you to consider the matter carefully.

"I am twenty-two years of age and possessed of a good contralto voice, having sung in most of the large cities of the New England States, and am in love with a young colored gentleman who is at present on the vaudeville stage. He is very anxious for me to accompany him and assist him on his tours by singing in connection with his 'turn.' He has proposed to me and I am almost at my wits' ends as to what my answer should be. My parents object very much to this union, saying he is not of my class and color. Do you think color has anything to do with love? Kindly answer this as soon as possible, as I shall anxiously await your reply. LULU O."

Not since the Correspondence Department of "My Queen" was started has anything shocked and horrified us like your letter, Lulu! My dear, dear child! Are you really serious? Is it possible that you, a white girl, would marry a negro? The thing is unnatural, and we beg that you will put it out of your mind at once. There can be no honest affection in such a union, which is sure to end in sorrow. Consider motherhood. Dare you inflict such a horror upon any human being as the one which must be contemplated at this hideous marriage? I do not disparage the colored race, but that a white girl should even consider a marriage with one of them, passes the limits of my comprehension. If you have an atom of self-respect left, give up this man at once!

"In the Questions and Answers of 'My Queen' I see many helps for the young ladies, but few from men, but will you please help me on a subject that troubles me very much. I have been in love and engaged to a young girl for over two years. She is still young, just past seventeen, but we have loved each other dearly, or at least I have. She would not give any other boy—I am only twenty—any encouragement for eighteen months, but then I overheard a few words that cut me to my heart, but she said she was only flirting. She said that if I would not allow her

the pleasure of flirting I could consider myself discharged. I told her I was not a bit jealous, but that if she did not stop it our engagement was at an end because I believed it wrong. Now, what shall I do? It would be like giving up my life to lose her, for I love her so well.

"I have read every number of 'My Queen,' and will continue to read it as long as it is for sale. If you will answer this letter you will relieve me of a great burden. JOHN W."

We are always glad to hear from our male readers and to give them any assistanee we can. It does not seem to us that the love of a girl who insists upon flirting with other men can be of much value. The young lady is probably too young to realize the seriousness of marriage or of an engagement.

Her action does not show very much respect for herself or for you, and, perhaps it would be just as well if you allowed your engagement to lapse for the present, as you suggest.

You have abundance of time in which to think of matrimony, and we would not advise you to be in haste to fall in love.

"There is a certain man giving my sister and me very much attention, and he has been very kind to us. He has tried on several occasions to have us visit his rooms, and at last we consented and went. He had some nice wine, and we got quite intoxicated. Do you think it right for us to associate with him? I am very young yet. I was fifteen last June, and my sister was fourteen last April. We would be very glad to have your opinion. ELSIE H."
ALMA H."

Dear Alma and Elsie! Your letter thrills me with indignation! Is it possible that such fiends can exist in the shape of men? Have you no parents, no one to protect you from such men as the one you write of? No man takes girls of your age to his room except for evil purposes, and the man who offers children under sixteen a glass of wine is the blackest sort of criminal. I advise you to avoid this man as you would a rattlesnake. In future you must be more careful where you go and whom you go with, and whenever any one suggests anything to you that you do not think right, go at once to your natural guardians and tell them about it.

Write to me again, and tell me the name of the villain who lured you to his room. The arm of the law is long, perhaps we can reach him.

"I am in love with a nice man forty years old. He is married and has children, but he has been away from his wife ten years. He says he loves me and wants me to marry him. I am fifteen years old and I love a young fellow who is about seventeen, but I think I will throw him over. The older man says he will pay my board and get me anything I want. I have taken money from him twice. My parents allow me to go with him, but they say it doesn't look right, as he is married. He kisses me every night. He takes me to his rooms and tells me he will go crazy if I don't marry him. Do you think I am silly for listening to him? I don't want you to say I am on the way to destruction, for I am not. I have read the four books about Marion Marlowe, and they are very nice, but I don't believe there is a girl living that would not let her fellow kiss and hug her, and there isn't any harm in it! Please publish this. MALINDA B."

Poor, foolish little girl! What are your parents thinking of! It looks as if the morals of your town were almost as bad as those of Paterson, New Jersey, where young girls of your age are being ruined by dozens. You are too young to reason on this vital question, but we sincerely hope that you have kept a copy of your letter and that you will read it over each year of your life. It will be almost penance enough for any woman. Kindly let us into your confidence to the extent of introducing us to your parents. Also, give us the full name and address of the "nice" married man who is making love to you. Just so long as age is evil and youth is foolish, we shall expect to read such heartbreaking letters. I am glad, very glad, that you are not on the "way to destruction." It is that assurance alone that makes the news in your letter bearable. See to it, little one, that you do not start on the downward road, but you have already taken the first step when you submit to hugging and kissing from a man who cannot, in honor, marry you.

"I think another girl is trying to get my sweetheart away from me. She keeps asking him to take her to parties and balls, and he feels so flattered at her invitations that he always goes. I don't like it a bit, but I know that if I scold him about it he will only go the more. How can I keep him by me in spite of her endeavors?
"LUCY J."

The only way we know of to retain any one's affection is to be more congenial and interesting than any one else. If you can hold the man's interest he will soon grow tired of the other girl. If he is so easily led as your letter would lead us to judge we would not try very hard to retain him. The only affection worth having is that which can withstand temptation and remain true to its object in spite of the allurements of others. If you feel that you cannot live without this man's society you will have to endeavor to interest him in yourself to the exclusion of all others. If he is not necessary to your existence the wisest thing for you to do will be to let him continue to go with those whose society he finds so congenial and seek other company yourself

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"Please tell me what to do as I'm all in a tangle. I have asked two girls to marry me, and they have both accepted. Shall I leave town at once and save myself trouble? I am only seventeen and work for my father, and he would kick me clean out of the store if he knew what I had done. Please answer quick before anything happens. NED B."

I doubt if your father would be quite so hard on you as all that, Ned! You are not the first boy of seventeen who has done something fool-

ish. If the girls who have promised to marry you show any inclination to make trouble for you we would advise you to try and appease their wrath by telling them the truth at once, and then, if they insist, you had better risk the "kicking" and tell your father. When you are safely out of this scrape we hope you will not get into another. Try to be more manly in your dealings with women if you wish both the fair sex and your fellow men to respect you.

"I am a young man nineteen years old. I am in love with a girl two years younger than myself. She is neither pretty nor homely. I know she would make a good wife. She is a girl who is very particular whom she speaks to. She neither hates nor loves me. She always has a pleasant smile when I speak to her. I would dearly love her if she were only my wife. Will you please advise me how I can win her love?

"ARCHIE C."

Why not tell her of your own? It is one of the quickest ways in the world to get a girl interested in you. Tell her that you love her and see what she says. After that, if you wish, we will tell you the next step in the proceedings.

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CATALOGUE OF ISSUES TO DATE.

1—From Farm to Fortune; or, Only a Farmer's Daughter.
2—Marion Marlowe's Courage; or, A Brave Girl's Struggle for Life and Honor.
3—Marion Marlowe's True Heart; or, How a Daughter Forgave.
4—Marion Marlowe's Noble Work; or, The Tragedy at the Hospital.
5—Marion Marlowe Entrapped; or, The Victim of Professional Jealousy.
6—Marion Marlowe's Peril; or, A Mystery Unveiled.
7—Marion Marlowe's Money; or, Brave Work in the Slums.
8—Marion Marlowe's Cleverness; or, Exposing a Bold Fraud.
9—Marion Marlowe's Skill; or, A Week as a Private Detective.
10—Marion Marlowe's Triumph; or, In Spite of Her Enemies.
11—Marion Marlowe's Disappearance; or, Almost a Crime.
12—Marion Marlowe in Society; or, A Race for a Title.
13—Marion Marlowe's Christmas Eve; or, The Treachery of a Factory Inspector.
14—Marion Marlowe's Escape; or, A Dangerous Mistake "On the Road."
15—Marion Marlowe in Buffalo; or, Betrayed by a Rival Company.

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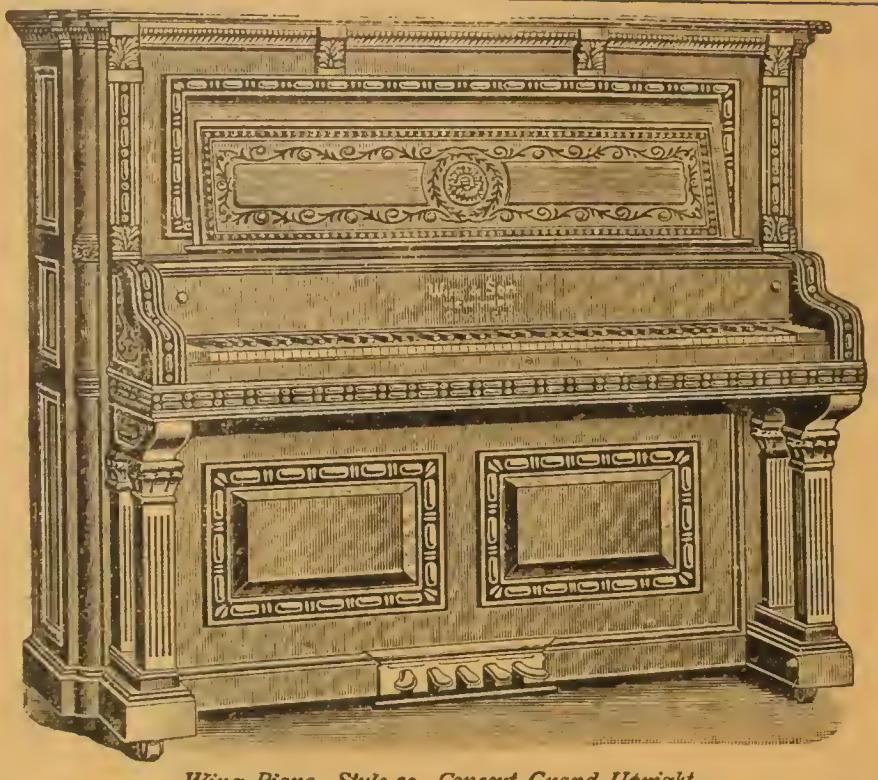

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THE WING PIANO

SAVE FROM $75 TO $200 The usual way to buy a piano is from a retail dealer or agent. We do not employ agents to sell the WING PIANO. It is sold direct from our factory. To the actual cost of manufacture we add our small wholesale profit. The purchaser saves the retail profit. This means a saving of from $75 to $200. No matter how far away you live, our improved system of doing business makes it actually more convenient and more satisfactory to buy a piano from us than to buy from a local dealer in your own town or city. Write us and receive full particulars.

SENT ON TRIAL; FREIGHT PREPAID We will send the above piano, or your choice of 23 other WING PIANOS, on trial, to any part of the United States, with freight prepaid in advance by us, and without asking for any advance payment or deposit. We will allow you to try it in your home for 20 days; you can compare it carefully and critically with the highest priced pianos sold in retail stores, and if it is not entirely satisfactory in every respect we will take it back and pay the return freight also. We do this to show our confidence in the WING PIANO. All expense and risk is ours. There is no money to be paid in advance. We pay all freights.

THE INSTRUMENTAL ATTACHMENT Imitates perfectly the tones of the Mandolin, Guitar, Harp, Zither and Banjo. Music written for these instruments, with and without piano accompaniment, can be played just as perfectly by a single player on the piano as though rendered by a parlor orchestra. The original instrumental attachment has been patented by us, and it cannot be had in any other piano, although there are several imitations.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION All WING PIANOS have 7⅓ octaves concert grand scale, overstrung, giving greatest volume and power of tone; double lever, grand repeating action. Cases are double veneered, and are made in all the choicest woods—circassian walnut, dark rich mahogany, genuine quartered oak, and ebonized.

OVER 30,000 WING PIANOS have been manufactured and sold in 32 years. Every WING PIANO is guaranteed for 12 years against any defect in tone, action, workmanship or material. We sell the WING PIANO on easy payments. Old instruments taken in exchange.

"I should like to say a few words about your pianos and manner of doing business. No one is doing themselves justice in not availing themselves of your most liberal terms. The tone, touch and durability of your pianos cannot be questioned. The instrumental attachment pleases every one who hears it, and allows a combination of effects which cannot be equalled."—ALBERT DRAEGERT, *Thornbury, Iowa.*

"The piano I bought of you in December is giving us the very best satisfaction. In tone, touch and workmanship it is certainly extra fine. The strangest part of it seems to be that you can sell such an instrument for such a low price."—F. D. GREEN, *Perry, Lake County, Ohio.*

A COMPLETE BOOK OF INFORMATION

About pianos sent free on request. The only complete book of its kind ever published. Everyone intending to purchase a piano should have it.

WING & SON - 362-364 East 12th Street, New York.

1868 — 32d Year — 1900.

"AFTER ELEVEN YEARS

of suffering, I am now strong and well, thanks to Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

"I have been troubled with female weakness in its worst form. I also had inflammation of the womb and ovaries, and at menstrual periods I suffered terribly. At times my back would ache very hard. I could not lift anything or do any heavy work; was not able to stand on my feet. My husband spent hundreds of dollars for doctors, but they did me no good. After a time I concluded to try Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, and I can truly say it does all that you claim for it to do.

"I have had no womb trouble since taking the fifth bottle. I weigh more than I have in years; can do all my own housework, sleep well, have a good appetite and now feel that life is worth living. I owe all to Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. I feel that it has saved my life."—MRS. ANNIE THOMPSON, South Hot Springs, Ark.

Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound Is a perfect medicine for women who are ill. It builds up the weakened female organism, and helps women over the hard places. Of this there is abundant proof.

MRS. AMOS FESCHLER, Box 226, Romeo, Mich., writes:

"DEAR MRS. PINKHAM:—Before I commenced to take your medicine I was in a terrible state, wishing myself dead a good many times. Every part of my body seemed to pain in some way. At time of menstruation my suffering was something terrible. I thought there was no cure for me, but after taking several bottles of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound all my bad feelings were gone. I am now well and enjoying good health. I shall always praise your medicine."

Don't experiment. If you are sick, get this medicine, which has cured a million women, and get Mrs. Pinkham's free advice. Her address is Lynn, Mass. All letters are opened, read, and answered by women.

MRS. ELIZA THOMAS, 634 Pine St., Easton, Pa., writes:

"I doctored with two of the best doctors in the city for two years and had no relief until I used the Pinkham remedies. My trouble was ulceration of the uterus. I suffered terribly, could not sleep nights, and thought sometimes that death would be such a relief. To-day I am a well woman, able to do my own work, and have not a pain. I used four bottles of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and three packages of Sanative Wash and cannot praise the medicines enough."

LYDIA E. PINKHAM'S VEGETABLE COMPOUND Always Cures Female Troubles.

$5000 REWARD Owing to the fact that some skeptical people have from time to time questioned the genuineness of the testimonial letters we are constantly publishing, we have deposited with the National City Bank, of Lynn, Mass., $5000, which will be paid to any person who will show that the above testimonials are not genuine, or were published before obtaining the writer's special permission.—LYDIA E. PINKHAM MEDICINE CO.